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# THE NATARAJA Temple

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# THE NATARAJA Temple

## HISTORY, ART AND ARCHITECTURE

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*Dedicated*
*to*
*Dr. C.S. VENKATESVARAN*
*Annamalai University*
*Annamalai*

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# Foreword

The temple complex at Chidambaram in Tamilnadu was the nerve centre of southern Saivisim for nearly a millennium now. In religious history and art, it is difficult to find such an impressive and monumental nucleus anywhere in the country. Notwithstanding its cumulative growth, century after century, from the early Chola period onwards, leaving an earlier, hazy formative stage out of consideration, its main and overwhelming importance was drawn from the conceptual and visual dimensions of the Śiva Nataraja *Tattva*, in the cosmic *Ānanda Taṇḍava*, and its repercussions were the most widely felt religio-artistic phenomena in the history of Tamilnadu, drawing the elite and the masses alike in a religious participation, unravelled for its emosional integration of the two.

There have been many publications on this vast temple town, both on its philosophical and artistic overtones. Any book, therefore, which helps the lay readers in appreciating the successive stages of its historical and artistic growth, which was an index of the religious appeal it made on royalty and laiety, would have to be welcomed. The present book-let is one such and is modest in its objective and brief in its narration of the salient structural, historical and legendary featutes of this place. One should be thankful for the young and enthusiastic author, Sri T. Satyamurthy, for his courageous attempt to bring together a lot of data which is available on the temple, but which has baffled even serious scholars, owing to inherent difficulties in piecing them out. It is hoped that the book will stimulate all those who would use it as a handyman for going around the temple, to pursue their interest in the temple which becomes, indeed, infectiously appealing, after the first visit.

New Delhi
24/8/77

K.V. SOUNDARA RAJAN

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# Preface

The Nataraja Temple at Chidambram, 'Temple of Temples' according to Tamil Literature, portrays the impact of the glories of the various dynasties of the Tamil Country, that are responsible for its growth. It is one of the rare shrines where the archaic form of early Indian Temple Architecture is still retained. Having situated in the heartland of 'Chola Country' it attained considerable strategic importance from the early Chola period onwards, up to the modern time. The study of evolution of Art and Architecture of this temple which has the happy blending of various styles is still a desideratum. However, pioneering works have been done by scholars like J.M. Somasundaram and S.R. Balasubrahmanyam. As a student of Architecture, I myself felt the necessity of a study oriented towards the Architectural classification of this temple, which would make readers or the visitors to digest the various architectural styles within the same premises. Hence the principal aim of this book is to set before the reader a detailed description of the Nataraja Temple Chronologically.

With this maiden attempt, I hope to take up soon the fascinating work of bringing out the role played by this temple in the religious history of the Tamil Country.

For this study, I derived inspiration from the personal guidance of Sri K.V. Soundarajan, Director, Archaeological Survey of India. I am indebeted to him highly. Also, I offer my grateful thanks to him for writing a foreword to this book. I am thankful to the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, for encouraging me to persue this work and for according permission to publish the photographs.

I am grateful to Panditaraja Soma Sethu Dikshitar, Trustee, Nataraja Temple, Chidambram for helping me to interpret the sanskrit texts of *Chidambara* Mahātmyam, *Anandagiri Śankara Vijaya* etc.

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I am indebted to Sri M.S. Mani, Senior Draughtsman, Archaeological Survey of India, for preparing the lay out plans of the temple. Equally, I am indebted to Shri A.T.P. Ponnuswamy, Senior Artist, Archaeological Survey of India for drawing the elevation of the *Ciṭ Sabhā* and for designing the Jacket. I am thankful to all those who have helped me to bring out this book.

Lastly my thanks are due to Messrs Classical Publications for bringing out this book as their publication.

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# General Information

Chidambaram situated in South Arcot District is about 240 kms, to the South of Madras. It is reached from Madras by rail (Southern Railway) or by road. Nataraja Temple is about 1 km. away from the Chidambaram Railway station. The retiring room of the Railway station, the inspection Bungalow belonging to the public works Department, the tourist home of Chidambaram Municipality and Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation's Hotel are the places where the visitor can stay. Apart from these, there are number of private lodges and Choultries among which the Raja's Choultry, Radhampur Choultry in South car Street and Nadars Choultry in south sannadhi are neat, and tidy. Advance reservation for accomadation can be made with the concerned managers of the Choultries. Also Annamalai University provides the facilities of the Guest House where scholars can stay with the permission of the Registrar of the University

The Nataraja temple remains open to visitors daily from 6 A.M. to 12 Noon and 5 P.M. to 10 P.M.

Nataraja temple known as *Sabhānāyakar temple* is administered by *Dikṣitars*, who are both priests and trustees of the temple. They are an endogamous clan who are referred to many times in Tamil hymns of 'Devaram' of the 7th Cent. A.D. Even through many rulers instituted properties for the daily Pujas, at present thc worship is conducted by the contributions of the devotees. The collection is made as periodical benefiations of the numerous devotees. The daily pujas at 7. A.M., 9. A.M., 11. A.M., 12. Noon, 6. P.M., 8. P.M. and 10 P.M. are met out of Kattalais (Endowments) set up by six independent endowments.

Similarly numerous festivals are celebrated from out of the contributions of various devotees. The festivals can be classified as follows.

(a) Daily procession of Caṇḍra Śekhara at 9 A.M. around Second *Prākāra*,

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(b) Procession of Śivakāmi idol on every Friday around Second *Prākāra*.

(c) Fortnight Festival on '*Pradosa*' day (Two days earlier and Thirteen days later to Full-Moon days.)

(d) Monthly Festival on 'Ardra Nakṣtra'..

(e) Two annual ten days festivals in the months of June and December.

(f) Six Abhiṣekams to Nataraja in a year namely during February, April, June, August, September and December.

All these festivals and the temple administration is managed by a committee of nine priests headed by a Secretary by election, while the committee is formed in turn among the priests themselves. The renovations are being done by independent bodies, but subject to the approval by the managing committee.

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# 1

# LEGENDS AND HISTORY

The name Chidambaram is the popular form of *Cit-Ambalam* (the hall of Bliss). It is a wider term to denote the *Cit-sabhā*—the sanctum sanctorum of the Naṭarāja temple. Other names of Chidambaram are Thillai, Puliyur or Vyāghrapura, Perumbaṭṭra Puliyūr and Puṇḍarīkapuram. The overwhelming sanctity of the main shrine here, let the rulers and the ruled to actuate a hope of eternal Bliss prevailing from the time of the early Pallavas. However, inscriptional evidences are found from the times of imperial Cholas.

Literary works like Chidambara Māhātmya in Sanskrit and Kovil Purāṇam in Tamil, take the sanctity of the shrine back to the time of Patañjali, the author of Yogasūtra of second century B.C. The tamil work Tirumandiram pushes the antiquity of the shrine to 5th Century B.C. With the various versions in different purāṇas, the legend that is commonly accepted by all as follows.

In Darukāvana, the heritics were full of pride and much elated at their profound learning indulging only in sacrifice refuting the existance of God. Śiva in order to suppress their pride took the disguise of Bhikṣāṭana (a mendicant). He was escorted by Viṣṇu as *Mohinī*. The ṛṣis were infatuated by the beauty of *Mohinī*, while their *patnies* (wives) followed Śiva, totally abandoning their herimitages. Soon the ṛṣis came to know the disguise and trick played by Śiva. They raised an

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*Abhicāra Homa* (witchcraft) to destory the intruders. A fierce tiger emerged from the fire, which was seized by Śiva. He further peeled off its skin with the nails of his finger and wrapped it around himself as lower garment. Then an antelope and a serpent were sent against Śiva, which Śiva held them as ornaments in his hand and neck respectively. Finally they sent against him utilising all their ascetic powers, a monstrosity in the form of a black dwarf—an *Apasmārapurṣa—Muyalaka.* On this dwarf Śiva placed his sacred foot keeping him writhing on the ground, and danced a Blissful Glorious dance, which was witnessed by all the Gods and Devas. In fine, the ṛṣis were subdued, they realised their faults and became His devotees.

In due course Viṣṇu narrated the delight of the dance he witnessed in Darukāvana to Ādiśeṣa. He (Ādiśeṣa) with Viṣṇu's consent practised penance and prayed to Śiva for a sight of the dance. In turn Śiva vouchsafed to perform the same "*Ānanda Tāṇḍava*" at Thillai forest. Ādiśeṣa took birth as Patañjali on the earth and in the company of Vyāgharapāda, awaited the advent of Lord Śiva for his dance. They both consecrated their individual *āśramas* and Śivalingas besides worshipping śiva as the Mūlasthāna linga in the Thillai forest.

The episode of Vyāgharapāda runs as follows: He was the son of Mādhyandina ṛṣi living on the banks of the Ganges. During his pilgrimage towards the south, he found the shrine of Svayambhu Śivalinga under a banyan tree near a tank. A rejuvenating bath in the tank and the divinity of the linga, inspired him and he decided to practice penance there to behold the dance of Śiva. His devotion went to the extent of offering flowers duly plucked before the honey particles were collected by the bees. He found it difficult soon to continue the vow as in the early hours of the dawn, the legs and hands were too slippery to climb the trees to pluck the flowers. As his devotion was intense, he was endowed with the boon of getting the tiger's feet and claws to carry-out his vow and the tiger's eye with which he could see even in the dark. Hence he was named as Vyāgharapāda. On a *taipuṣya* (full moon day in January

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and February) fixed by Śiva early, the *Ānanda Tāṇḍava*—the dance of Bliss was performed by Śiva in Thillai in the presence of Śivakāma Sundarī his consort and all the Gods, the Devas and the two devotees. At the end of the dance Śiva granted a boon to the devotees by which they sought his continuance of the mystic dance in Thillai forest and the place of the dance became Ambalam or sabhā and the Lord *Sabhānāyaka*.

According to Pundarīka Māhātmya, the *cit sabhā* is for the worship of Śiva in His ākāśic etheral from invisible to human eyes, but pervading throughout the universe[1].

According to Kovil Purāṇam a poem in Tamil of Umapati Śivācārya, Simhavarman II (550-575 A.D.) reached Thillai forest during his voyage, took a bath in Śiva gangā tank and to his surprise found his skin disease cured. Chidambara Māhātmya names him as Hiranya-varman (the golden bodied) and speaks about his company with Patañjali and Vyāghrapāda. Being inspired by the shrine and holy tank he caused the earliest temple to be erected and the said tank to be renovated. (The tree Thillai (Excocecaria-Agallocha) has been accepted generally as the sthala vṛkṣa of this temple). Historically no such inscription is left in the temple. However we can safely conclude the construction of the main shrine (*cit-sabhā*) as the contribution of the early Pallavas as still the archaic form is retained here. Probably being an inspired shrine rather an institution during the period of Chola dynasty, the shrine has been renovated and additional structures added resulting in the annihilation of the earlier records."[2]

The earliest available inscriptions referring to this temple belong to the period of Aditya-I (871-907 AD) a Chola monarch.

1. Five rudimentary elements of the universe namely earth, water, fire, wind and Ether are represented as five lingas, the rest four being Kanchipuram representing earth, Tiruvanaikkaval water, Tiruvannamalai fire and Kalahasti wind.
2. Fergusson—History of Indian and Eastern Architecture 1876—Page 356.

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But the existence of the shrine earlier than this is well established in the devotional hymns, sung by the Saivite Nāyanmārs. The earliest among them according to literary sources are Appar and Sundarar of seventh century A.D., Appar is supposed to be an elder contemporary of Mahendravarma Pallava and of Sambandar another Nāyanmār. The rock-out cave inscription at Tiruchinapoly clearly proves the conversion of the Pallava king from Jainism to Hinduism by the saint 'Appar. Appar in his hymns glorifies the great city of Thillai and mentions that the hall of the Lord was gilded by Devas. He refers to the Lord as bestowing a smile of grace, a coiffure of Bliss, a pearl-like body with holy ashes and a lifted foot. He prays for the rememberance of the shrine forever. Thus he gives a clear picture of the existance of the main shrine as an inspiring idol.

Saint Gñānasambandhar also refers to Thillai as a ritualistic centre of that age. Ānandagiri Śankara Vijaya[1] refers to the birth of Śankara at Chidambaram.

The history of the later part of 8th century A.D. is dominated by the presence of Saint Sundaramurthy, who mentions about a Pallava ruler as the devotee of Śiva. The Pallava ruler may be probably Dantivarman and in his work 'Tiruttondar Togai' he refers to the priest of the Naṭarāja shrine. Thus during the rule of the Pallavas Chidambaram was initiated to be a spiritual centre even though the architectual and inscriptional evidences are lacking.

Literary evidences too cease with Dantivarman (C 800 A.D.). But from the inception of Chola kingdom by Vijayālaya we find Chidambaram attaining a significant part of history. It is Aditya-I (871-907 A.D.) who with the gold acquired from the conquest of the Kongu country covered the hall of Chidambaram with gold. But this act of gilding the *kanaka sabhā* has been attributed to the credit of different kings of this dynasty.

1. Ānandagiri Sankara Vijaya—Calcutta—1881.

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However, it is credited in favour of Parantaka I (901-953 A.D.) a valorous king who won many wars and utilised the entire wealth of victory to enrich the Chidambaram Shrine. Thiruvalangādu copper plate inscriptions praise him for the act of enroofing the Ciṭṭrambalam with golden plates. Later the sparkling renaissance during the reign of Raja Raja-I, made the shrine the spiritual centre of popular faith. Umāpati Śivācārya records in verses, Raja Raja's recovery of the *Devaram* hymns from the dark rooms of Chidambaram temple. The innovation of the *Devara hymns* in the Saivite temples of the Chola country made this temple to be a temple of temples as the first place among Saiva shrines was assigned to this temple which was designated as *Koil* (temple). The name '*Ādavallān*' (one who is able to dance) which was given to one of the chief images in the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tanjore is derived from that of the deity in the Chidambaram temple. Also the titles *Śri Rāja Rāja* and *Śivapāda Śekhara* were conferred on him to distinguish his religious munificence. From two of the Tanjore inscriptions, it is evident that the names of the Gods, as well as the temple Chidambaram and their synonyms were very commonly borne by men and women during the time of Raja Raja. His frequent visits to the temple and his devotion to the Lord are depicted in the paintings of the Bṛhadīśvara temple in which the *Cit-sabhā* with the Naṭarāja in it are picturesquely painted. Both the inscriptions and structures erected by Raja Raja-I, have disappeared during the renovations and additions done in the period of later Cholas.

From the time of Kulottunga-I (1070-1120 A.D.) the history of the Cholas and the history of Chidambaram became one. Every rise in the kingdom has been noticed by additional structures and renovations in the temple. Kanchipuram inscriptions reveal that Kulottunga-I constructed a palace at Chidambaram. This may probably be to supervise the exhaustive renovations he undertook in the temple. From an inscription we understand that he inserted a stone brought from Kambodia to establish his relationships with the king of Cambodia in *Edirambalam*. Apart from his gifts, we find during his reign, his sister Kunda-

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vai assigns various donations to the temple. Nīdur inscriptions pertaining to this period mention the construction of the temple for Sonnavārarivār in the north east part of the hall of pillars (*kanaka sabhā*) by a feudatory king known as Kandar Mādhavar.

Vikrama Chola, the son of Kulottunga-I, who followed his father rather made Chidambaram as his second capital. His contributions to the temple are enormous. The first reference to the festivity of the temple occurs in inscriptions pertaining to this period. He caused the car festival of the temple to be celebrated with full grandeur. Also all the *Vāhanas* were gold plated and donated to the temple. He erected the first *Prākāra* wall which is known as '*Vikrama Chola Thirumāligai*'. Also the second *Prākāra* was constructed during his period and was named as '*Kulottunga Māligai*'. Naraloka Vīra, a feudatory under Kulottunga–I and Vikrama Chola, was a devotee of Śri Naṭarāja. He errected a wall around the temple, which was named after him. He errected two towers also probably the tower of Śivakāma Sundari Amman temple. Another valuable information from the inscriptions pertaining to this period is that he enroofed '*Perambalam*' with copper plates. Hence *Perambalam (Deva Sabhā)* was completed during this period. The construction of hundred pillared hall is ascribed to him. Some of the pillars of this *maṇṭapa* bear the inscriptions 'Svastiśri Vikrama-Chola Thiru Maṇḍapam'. Hence it can be concluded as being erected by Naraloka Vīra. Probably the shrine of Pārvatī was erected during this period as the inscriptions speak that the idol of the goddess was warped by him and constructed the tower of the deity. The Śivagaṅgā tank was dug deep and stone banks with leading steps were constructed. Thus most of the existing structures of to-day are his sole contributions.

Probably the erection of the shrine of Pārvatī mentioned in the inscriptions, may refer to the Śivakāma Sundarī temple in the third *Prākāra*. Naraloka Vīra maṇṭapa with two tall towers refered to in the inscriptions must be only the hundred pillared hall in which a small portion has been dedicated to his Master's (Vikrama Chola's) heroism.

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Vikrama Chola was succeded by his son Kulotunga-II surnamed Anapāya and Tirunīru Cholan. These titles are indicative of his devout faith in the Saiva tenents. Sekkilar, who states that he compiled the famous Periyapuranam under the patronage of Anapāya must have done so under Kulottunga-II. *Kulottunga Chola Ulā* and *Rāja Rāja Chola Ulā* by the poet Ottakkuttar give further particulars of the additions done to the temple during this period. Among them consecration of the temple car and the formation of the four main streets are worth mentioning.

Kulottunga III (1178-1216 A.D.) continued the royal patronage after Kulottunga II. In the early part of his reign he was successful in the three wars against the Pandyas, the Ceylonese and Konku kings.

He crowned himself at Chidambaram, being honoured with the title "*Tirubhuvaneśvara Deva*". Hence to commemorate the victory he built the Tribhuvaneśvara temple at Tribhuvanam. Building of a *gopura* and *mukhamaṇṭapa* for Naṭarāja temple and the enclosing cloister of the Śivakami Amman temple are credited to his glory. The third *prākāra* in this temple, the pavements and its walls running along the main *gopura* were constructed during his time. Hence this enclosure is named as '*Rājākkal Tambirān Thirumāligai*', Rājākkal Tambirān being the title of Kulottunga III.

The Periya purāṇam compiled by Sekkiḷar, might have been expounded during the period of Kulottunga III, in thousand pillared hall. Probably the work was started during the time of Kulottunga II and finished during the reign of Kulottunga III. However the contribution of thousand pillared hall can be attributed to both these kings.

Raja Raja III, succeeded Kulottunga III and even in the decline of power and calamities in kingdom, the importance of the temple did not diminish in any way. The constructional activities ceased for a short period. The king granted vast

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lands for the supply of fruits and flowers. The shrine was significant enough to attract the far and near. Inscriptions speak that the Generals sent by Vīranarasimha Deva-II (Hoysala king) to the assistance of Raja Raja III to liberate the Chola kingdom from Kopperunjiñga, paid their tributes to Lord Naṭarāja, before carrying out their actions. Later Chola king Rajendra-III was also proud to call himself as the devotee of Lord Naṭatāja (Iṣṭa devatā).

The rise of the Mediaeval Pandyas during 1216 A.D. does not in any way diminish the royal patronage to the temple. They also considered Chidambaram temple as the centre of their religious activities and benefactions. Māravarma Sundara Pandya-I (1116-38 A.D.) conquered the Chola country but had given it back to Raja Raja III. Māravarma Sundara Pandya. II (1239-1251 A.D.) also made frequent visits to this temple and granted flower gardens and conducted the festivals. But it was during the period of Jatavarma Sundara Pandya-I, that the entire Chola kingdom got incorporated into Pandya kingdom. Again structural activities started in full vigour and from that time onwards additions were done in the outer *Prākāra* of this temple as the inner complex had developed into a prepetual structure. Inscriptions credit him with canopying the "golden hall" with gold and his other two great contributions are the western *gopura* and a Subrahmanya temple called as 'Pāndya-nāyaka temple'. Jaṭavarma Vīra Pāndya (1253—1268 A.D.) was crowned at the hundred pillared hall of Chidambaram temple and was honoured with *Vīra abhiṣeka* and *Vijaya abhiṣeka.* Most of his gifts are towards the maintenance of the garden for the flower offerings to the lotus feet of Sri. Naṭarāja. Maravarma Vikarama Pandya (1268—1281A.D.) was another Pandya king who made several endowments for the supply of flowers and plantains for Lord's worship. Māravarma kulaśekhhara Deva-I (C 1310 A.D.) was the last king of the dynasty who patronised the temple like his predecessors.

Kadava chieftains Kopperunjiñga, a contemporary to Sundara Pandya was another devotee of Lord Naṭarāja. He erected

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the South *Gopura* during the fifth year of his reign. Attur inscriptions name these as 'Sokkasiyan' tower' Sokkasiyan being one of his glorious names. *Tirupuranthakam* sanskrit inscription ascribes the construction of the eastern tower to the same Kopperunjiñga. He also extended the main western entrance named as '*Agalankan*' entrance. Similarly the entrance to the Śivakāmi Amman temple was added during this period. After the Muslim invasions, the renaissance of Hinduism during Vijayanagara rule witnessed a benevelant temple administration throughout South India. In the later part of the fourteenth century during the reign of Kumara Kampana, the first Vijaynagara Viceroy in Tamil country we find the consecration of the Govindarāja shrine. Probably this shrine mentioned in the early literature might have been removed by Kulottungas-II, a staunch saivite. Another Viceroy Virupana Udiyar (1377—1400 A.D.) is said to have gilded the vimana of Chidambaram temple with gold. Inscription dated 1428 A.D. available in the temple shows the continuous patronage of the shrine by the Vijayanagara kings. Among them the significant benefaction is the construction of the north *Gopura* in 1560 by Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Achutta Rāya gifted 18 villages for the completion of this *Gopura* during 1529 A.D. Hence by this time the *Gopura* might have been completed. Nayaks of Tanjore also made endowments to this temple. An inscription in Tiruvetkalam mentions about the gift of a village on 22nd Jan' 1567, to the Chidambaram temple for the merit of Tirumala Rāya a Vijayanagara king by Achuttapa Nayakar. Another interesting incident is the visit of father Pimenta to Chidambaram and his meeting with Kṛṣṇappa Nayaka-II of Gingee, who stayed at Chidambaram renovating the Govindarāja temple during 1598 A.D.

During 17th century A.D. we find a reference to Śri Ranga Rāya III, contributing additional structures to this temple.

Such being the inspiring spiritual nature of the temple, it, became a place of considerable strategic importance during 18th century A.D. We have specific reference to conclude that the French occupied the temple and utilised it as a Fort in

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lands for the supply of fruits and flowers. The shrine was significant enough to attract the far and near. Inscriptions speak that the Generals sent by Vīranarasimha Deva-II (Hoysala king) to the assistance of Raja Raja III to liberate the Chola kingdom from Kopperunjiñga, paid their tributes to Lord Naṭarāja, before carrying out their actions. Later Chola king Rajendra-III was also proud to call himself as the devotee of Lord Naṭatāja (Iṣṭa devatā).

The rise of the Mediaeval Pandyas during 1216 A.D. does not in any way diminish the royal patronage to the temple. They also considered Chidambaram temple as the centre of their religious activities and benefactions. Māravarma Sundara Pandya-I (1116-38 A.D.) conquered the Chola country but had given it back to Raja Raja III. Māravarma Sundara Pandya. II (1239-1251 A.D.) also made frequent visits to this temple and granted flower gardens and conducted the festivals. But it was during the period of Jatavarma Sundara Pandya-I, that the entire Chola kingdom got incorporated into Pandya kingdom. Again structural activities started in full vigour and from that time onwards additions were done in the outer *Prākāra* of this temple as the inner complex had developed into a prepetual structure. Inscriptions credit him with canopying the "golden hall" with gold and his other two great contributions are the western *gopura* and a Subrahmanya temple called as 'Pāndya-nāyaka temple'. Jaṭavarma Vīra Pāndya (1253—1268 A.D.) was crowned at the hundred pillared hall of Chidambaram temple and was honoured with *Vīra abhiṣeka* and *Vijaya abhiṣeka.* Most of his gifts are towards the maintenance of the garden for the flower offerings to the lotus feet of Sri. Naṭarāja. Maravarma Vikarama Pandya (1268—1281A.D.) was another Pandya king who made several endowments for the supply of flowers and plantains for Lord's worship. Māravarma kulaśekhhara Deva-I (C 1310 A.D.) was the last king of the dynasty who patronised the temple like his predecessors.

Kadava chieftains Kopperunjiñga, a contemporary to Sundara Pandya was another devotee of Lord Naṭarāja. He erected

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the South *Gopura* during the fifth year of his reign. Attur inscriptions name these as 'Sokkasiyan' tower' Sokkasiyan being one of his glorious names. *Tirupuranthakam* sanskrit inscription ascribes the construction of the eastern tower to the same Kopperunjiñga. He also extended the main western entrance named as '*Agalankan*' entrance. Similarly the entrance to the Śivakāmi Amman temple was added during this period. After the Muslim invasions, the renaissance of Hinduism during Vijayanagara rule witnessed a benevelant temple administration throughout South India. In the later part of the fourteenth century during the reign of Kumara Kampana, the first Vijaynagara Viceroy in Tamil country we find the consecration of the Govindarāja shrine. Probably this shrine mentioned in the early literature might have been removed by Kulottungas-II, a staunch saivite. Another Viceroy Virupana Udiyar (1377—1400 A.D.) is said to have gilded the vimana of Chidambaram temple with gold. Inscription dated 1428 A.D. available in the temple shows the continuous patronage of the shrine by the Vijayanagara kings. Among them the significant benefaction is the construction of the north *Gopura* in 1560 by Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Achutta Rāya gifted 18 villages for the completion of this *Gopura* during 1529 A.D. Hence by this time the *Gopura* might have been completed. Nayaks of Tanjore also made endowments to this temple. An inscription in Tiruvetkalam mentions about the gift of a village on 22nd Jan' 1567, to the Chidambaram temple for the merit of Tirumala Rāya a Vijayanagara king by Achuttapa Nayakar. Another interesting incident is the visit of father Pimenta to Chidambaram and his meeting with Kṛṣṇappa Nayaka-II of Gingee, who stayed at Chidambaram renovating the Govindarāja temple during 1598 A.D.

During 17th century A.D. we find a reference to Śri Ranga Rāya III, contributing additional structures to this temple.

Such being the inspiring spiritual nature of the temple, it, became a place of considerable strategic importance during 18th century A.D. We have specific reference to conclude that the French occupied the temple and utilised it as a Fort in

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1753. In 1759 an attack by the English failed. Thus the temple was used as a Fort during the French wars from 1753 to 1760 A.D. and also during the invasion by Hyder Ali. However Hyder Ali occupied the temple in 1780 A.D. He improved the defences and placed a garrison in the great temple. The stone balls used for the garrison were removed from the hundred pillared hall, very recently. In 1781 Sir Eyre Coote attacked and gained victory. Owing to these wars the temple suffered much destruction. Most of the destructions were the demoltition of many *maṇṭapas* in the *Third Prākāra*. During these wars there is likelihood of the destruction of many valuable inscription. An inscription dated 1773 A.D. mentions that Lord Naṭarāja's idol was brought back to *Cit-Sabhā* from Tiruvarur in this year. It might have been taken to Tiruvarur during the war period. After this the remarkable epoch of the temple is noticed during the period of Pachaiayappa Mudalaair an endower of many educational and Charitable endowments in 18th century A.D. The eastern *Gopura* was renovated during this period. "The Nattukottai Nagarathar" as Fergusson mentioned, 'added a wide cloister round the enclosure in the second *Prākāra*, renovated all the *Gopura*, cloistered the *maṇṭpas* of Sivaganga tank and reconstructed all the shrines during 1891 A.D.'[1]. This was followed by another renovation with a kumbha abhiṣeka in 1955 A.D. (7-8-1955). With all this additions and renovations we find the reconstruction of the outer most *prākāra* wall at present.

1. History of Indian and Eastern Architecture Vol. I, p. 376.

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# 2

# ARCHITECTURE

## A—GENERAL DESCRIPTION

In contrast with the general conformity with the other south Indian temple components namely a cella, *Ardhamaṇṭapa*, *Mahāmaṇṭapa*, *Mukhamaṇṭapa*, we find the *sabhās* treated as sanctums in Chidambaram. As the connotation of the word Chidambaram (Cit-Ambalam) itself denotes a *Sabhā* (hall) of conscious, we find a number of *sabhās* which are typical to this temple complex alone. *Sabhās* or *Ambalams* are not entirely new to the South Indian Architecture, since we find them as edifices with in a temple complex in many of the temples of Kerala[1]. Leaving the legends, the earliest literary evidences of the devotional songs of '*Tirumuvar*' refer to the main shrine as Ambalatāduvan. On the same basis it is conspicuous to conclude that the main shrine ever since the inception is a dancing form of Lord Śiva. Hence the *Cit-Sabhā* is the sanctum sanctorum of the complex around which many shrines had grown each shrine being complete in itself.[2]

*Cit-Sabhā* is the most ancient part of the temple complex. (Fig. II-71) Adjoined to *cit-sabhā* is the *kanaka sabhā* a similar

1. H. Sarkar, Monuments of Kerala—Delhi. 1973.
2. Stlala purānas speak of the date of the mulastlana linga as the earliest.

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edifice like the former. In front of these two is the *Nṛtta Sabhā* (Fig II-30). The fourth *sabhā* is the *Deva Sabhā* in the second *prākāra* of the temple. The fifth *sabhā* namely the *Rāja Sabhā*, the thousand pillared hall is in the third *prākāra*. The entire complex has grown with these *sabhās*. Beginning with the small unpretentious *cit-sabhā* we find the culmination in the *Rāja Sabhā* the thousand pillared hall of majestic proportions. Before analysing the architectural factors of these sabhās, it is necessary to distinguish the original structures from the recent additions. No doubt the recent renovations created a chaotic architectural confusion that it sounds incredible to get a clear plan of the original temple. The temple complex (Fig-I) today covers an area of 55 acres (400yds to 350yds). Within this are the four *prākāras* of the temple, each being enclosed by a separate wall of different periods. The wall of the outermost *prākāra* was constructed by Virappa Nāyaka during 17th century A.D. This is pierced by four entrances on all cardinal directions but directly paving the entrance to the four main towers of the third *prākāra* wall. None of these entrances bear any super structure. These entrances bear a gateway at the centre and both in and out are a double colonnadded portico on either side. Thus it can be divided into four quadrants of small *maṇṭapas*, with a passage in the middle. Some of the columns in these *maṇṭapas* resemble the columns of late Chola period. There is a possibility of late Chola columns, being used in later times as they do not conform with the original building. Except the entrance in the east, the rest are double storeyed the upper storeys being used at present day to ring the bell to declare the *pūja* time.

The fourth *prākāra* encloses mainly the temple gardens and a few shrines. The Karpaka Vināyaka in the Western *gopura* is the ancient shrine of late Chola period. The shrine is an original sculpture in the niche of the *gopura*. Infront of the east *gopura* are the temples of Chintāmaṇi Ganapati and Śri Vallīśa (Subrahmaṇya). These two are two independent shrines of Drāvidavimāna. Thus this prākāra consists of buildings, that are not co-ordinating with the inner *prākāras*.

In fact the third *prākāra* wall is in some conformity with the original plan of the temple. This marks the ancient boundry

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of the temple. This is pierced by four main towers. It is a granite wall capitioned by mortar construction. Inner facade of the wall has a two storeyed cloister of late Chola period, extending around the four sides. This cloister is missing in the south side of the eastern wall and in some places in the sector between the north and east *gopuras*. Apart from the main *gopuras*, the eastern wall is pierced by another two gates without super structures in the northern side of the east *gopura*. These entrances are the customary entrances of late Chola temples which are used at present to carry the processional deities outside the temple. The Southern half of this *Prākāra* is occupied by the inner enclosures or rather the first and second *Prākāras* (Fig. 1-10). There is a shrine of Gaṇeśa, called as Mukkuruṇi Vināyaka in the south western corner. This is a shrine of 17th century with the alterations in the recent renovations. Another shrine in the southern part is the Vīra Subrahmaṇya (Fig.10). This is a very recent construction over the niche in the inner facade of the west *gopura*. A mortar, *Nandi* and the *Balipīṭha* (Fig.1-76) are two ancient structures in this part of the *prākāra*. The northern half contains a very huge Śivaganga tank (Fig.1-22) the Mīnakṣi Sundareśvara temple (Fig. 1-11),hundred pillared hall (Fig.1-12), the śivakāmi Amman Temple, (Fig.1-14) pandya Nāyaka shrine (Fig. 1-20) and the thousand pillared hall (Fig.1-24). Other shrines are small and probably later than these shrines. But none of these shrines and *maṇṭapas* were constructed to coordinate any common shrines in this *prākāra*. However two mortar *Nandīs* in this *prākāra*, one facing *cit-sabhā*, another the *Mūlasthana* give a scope to understand the orientation of the temple. Nor do *gopuras* give any scope of understanding the earliest temple plan. No two of the four *gopuras* are placed opposite to each other. The positions of the *gopuras* appear to be in accordance with the buildings already existing in *prākāras* 1 and 2. The south *gopura* even though not in the axial line of the *cit-sabhā*, *kanaka sabhā* and *Nṛtta Sabhā*, is just near the axial line. The east and west *gopuras* are near to the entrances to the second *prākāra* entrances. However, the *Mūlasthāna* shrine, the mortar *Nandi* facing west (Fig. 1-77) and the east *gopura* roughly fall on an axial line. The north

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*gopura* is considerably at the western corner of the *prākāra* wall. Probably this is an entrance to the Śivakāmi Amman temple and other groups. Further the second *prākāra* wall is surmounted by *Kapotas* and *kūḍus* of the Chola period. From this we can safely conclude that these *gopuras* were built later than the second *Prākāra* and had nothing to do with the earliest structures inside.

However with this it is evident that the *cit-sabhā* facing south in the first *prākāra* and the *mūlasthāna* facing east in the second *prākāra* are the two significant centres.

The second *prākāra* wall is pierced by two entrances one in the east and another in the west. The western one bears the name 'Akalangan Tiruvāyal' definitely a Chola structure, the front *maṇṭapa* being added later, the eastern one even though ancient, being subjected to much alterations in the recent renovations. The interiors of these *prākāras* have been extensively rebuilt and the second *prākāra* is completely roofed. Raised platforms all around the *prākāras* were erected leaving an aisle in between. In the renovations done in the 19th Century. A.D., many sub-shrines were erected totally confusing the plan of the temple. The ancient structures of this *prākāra* are the *Nṛtta sabhā*, *Deva sabhā*, *Mahalaksmi* shrine and *Mūlasthana*.[1]

Renovations modified the innermost enclosures (first *prākāra*) also. However one can find some most ancient architectural edifices left without much alterations. The first *prākāra* wall in the eastern side is pierced by two entrances, one just direct to the eastern entrance of the second *prākāra* wall known an '*Kuḍagu arai*'. This entrance without any superstructure has single storey colonnaded portico on either side. The date of the columns can be ascribable to Chola period. Another entrance is just in front of the Govindaraja shrine (Fig. 2-62). Infact the recent renovations changed the original

1. Many early writers of this temple architecture had failed to note the synonyms of these structures.

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shape of the entrance. A super structure is also added very recently. The southern wall is also pierced by an entrance. This is directly infront of *cit-sabhā* and is flanked by *dvārapālas* of early Chola period.

Within this *prākāra* is the *cit-sabhā* the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. *Kanaka sabhā* is another ancient edifice in front of the *cit-sabhā* and infact a connected building. The *prākāra* wall has a two storey-pillared cloister. It was construced during the time of Kulottunga-I. The other shrine namely the Govindarāja shrine is that of the reclining form of Viṣṇu which appears to be altered in recent renovations. The superstructure over the shrine, which is a *sāla śikhara* is a recent addition. The *cit–sabhā* is surrounded by double colonnaded round columns in highly polished stone. This and the *Palli arai* (Fig. 2-66) also belong to 19th century AD.

Thus the temple complex basically differs from other south Indian temples in two ways, namely (a) the customary components of other south Indian temples like *garbha griha, Ardha maṇṭapa, Mukhamaṇṭapa* etc. are absent as far as the main sanctum is concerned. (b) The position and the orientation of *cit-sabhā* towards south.

These above stated facts make some of the writers on Indian Architecture to conclude that the *Mūlasthana* is the original sanctum sanctorum of the complex. It is also true that shrines facing south are rare in south Indian Architecture. But the *cit-sabhā* is definitely facing south. This is further strengthened by the orientation of the *Deva Sabhā* and *Rāja Sabhā* in second and third *prākāras* respectively. Even though they were constructed later than the *cit-sabhā*, they are in one way connected with the sanctum, as the main deity is supposed to occupy these *sabhās* on some festive occasions. Thus the *cit-sabhā* is definitely oriented towards south and also the temple is famous for its *sabhās* as the Lord exhibits his dance here. The *Mūlasthāna* shrine even though existed early was renovated subsequently and is a separate unit. Hence the *cit-sabhā, kanaka sabhā* with the bull in front is the earliest phase of the

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temple complex. In the middle phase we find the construction of the walls of the first three *prākāras*, erection of *Deva sabhā*, hundred pillared hall, Śivakāma Sundari shrine and thousand pillared hall. In later phase the four *gopuras* and pandaya Nāyaka shrine were erected.

## B. THE SABHAS :

*Cit-sabhā* (9th century A.D.) :— *Cit-sabhā* (Pl ate III) the sanctum sanctorum of the temple is the common nucleus of the first *prākāra*. Also this is the place where the archaic form of the early Indian Temple Architecture is still retained. *Kanaka sabhā* is in front of *cit-sabhā*. The plinth mouldings of the *sabhās* are *Upāna*, *Padma*, a high *Jagati* and *Kampa*.

Upto this there is no distinction between the *kanaka sabhā* and *cit-sabhā*. *Kanaka sabhā* is a hypo style hall of eighteen cylinderical wooden columns above this. The *śikhara* proper is a wooden roof, covered with copper plates. A hall of 5′ width connects both the *sabhās*. This is flanked by steps on eastern and western sides. *Cit-sabhā* stands on few more mouldings of 3′ hight. It is accessible through five steps from *Kanaka sabhā*. The mouldings are *Kampa*, *Padma* and *Kumuda*. A series of gryphons heads (*vyālavāri*) adron these mouldings. With this the stone edifice stops and the roof is supported by 28 free standing wooden pillars. The western, northern and eastern sides of the *sabhā* are closed with wooden pierced windows. This is rather a type of *Ganadhvāra*. The southern facade is covered with the pierced wooden windows and a door in the centre. The entire facade is covered with silver plates. The pillars support a wooden roof, technically speaking a *sāla śikhara* of peculiar type. Actually this *śikhara* resembles the Draupadī Ratha at Mamallpuram. Even though it is not the mere copy of Mamallpuram, architecturally this has to be taken as a strange type with rectangular base and a curvilinear *śikhara*. Above the wooden ceiling small gold plated copper tiles resembling the lotus petals

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of 6″ width are fitted with screws in horizontal rows. The screw of the lower-most one is covered with the upper tiles and thus the technique is carried upto the pinnacle where the entire roof is covered with golden plates. Nine golden *kalaśas* adorn the roof. Not only is this a common type of roof in all the *sabhās* of this temple, but also is found over the sanctums of other shrines. *Kanaka sabhā* has a separate roof similar to *cit-sabhā* but the outer coverings are only copper tiles. The *kalaśas* are nine and also made of gold. The *cit-sabhā* contains bronze images of Naṭarāja, Śivakama Sundari, a miniature crystal linga, Ratna Sabhapati and apart from all a peculiar invisible shrine known as Chidambara *Rahasya.* Thus three types of Hindu worship namely Rūpa (Form), Arūpa (Formless). *Rūpa-Arūpa* (Form and Formless) are accommodated in the *cit-sabhā*; warship of Naṭarāja being *Rūpa*, the Rahasya *Arūpa* and the worship of linga *Rūpa-Arūpa.*

Architecturally there is nothing equal to these *sabhās* in South Indian architecture. In fact, they are mere *maṇṭapas* where any activity can be well exhibited. Hence the constructors had chosen this type to the shrine of eternal dance. The style of the building upto the plinth without any doubt is an early chola construction. It is a problem to the on looker to understand how these architects had chosen wooden medium till then. Probably, they had retained the early synonym, which existed before there renovations. Regarding the date, the earliest inscriptional reference so far available mentions that Paranthaka-I canopied the roof with gold. Probably, the structure was completed during Āditya-I and canopied during the time of Paranthaka-I. Definite evidences are there to show that the *kanaka sabhā*, the front hall was constructed during the time of Paranthaka-I.

The middle phase witnessed a spectacular growth of these sabhās and the major parts of the temple today have been erected during this period.

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*Nṛtta Sabhā* (*Plate IV*): (*10th & 13th century A.D.*)

Apparently looking like an *Agramaṇḍapa* to the *cit-sabhā* complex, in the axial line of *cit-sabhā* and *kanaka sabhā* is the *Nṛtta sabhā*. Inscription No. 119 of 1888 ascribes the date of Edirambalam to the time of Kulottunga-I, and probably this Edirambalam must be the *Nṛtta sabhā*. But the development of architecture in this sabhā drives us to fix a posterior date.

The sabhā today is with an Urdhva Tāṇḍava Mūrti shrine facing east and a *maṇṭapa* like *agramaṇṭapa* of late chola temples infront. The *sabhā* is accessible through a flight of steps from the eastern side. The southern and western facades are really majestic work of late chola period. The plinth is ornamented with graceful dancing figures. On the eastern and western sides are two stone wheels fronted by galloping horses. Over this stylobate are the fifty-six intricately carved granite pillars, resembling that one in the Pandya Nāyaka temple in the third *prākāra*. Two super structures of copper plated wooden ceiling, resembling the *cit-sabhā* are noticed, one confined to the sanctum and another to the front *maṇṭapa*. Generally 13th century A.D. is the date ascribed to this *sabhā*. While ascribing date the position of this *sabhā* in the second *prākarā* has to be considered. This is the only ancient structure for which the southern wall[1] of the second *prākāra* is extended upto the southern extremity. With this and with the inscriptional evidences, we can safely conclude that the *sabhā* was constructed in two phases; the first during the period of Kulottunga-I with only the sanctum; the hypo style hall with minor renovations during the period of Mediaeval Pandyas (13th century A.D.). The plinth contains some rare pieces of dancing sculptures among which Śiva playing on five mouthed musical instruments is an interesting one (Plate V.)

*Deva Sabhā* : (11th century A.D.)

This is otherwise known as *Perambalam*. From the hypo style hall now we pass on to a closed hall with a super structure

1. Constructed by Kulotunga-I.

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of *sāla sikhara*. The plinth of the *sabhā* is buried amongest the surrounding platforms, erected during the renovation in 19th century A.D. Inscriptions mention that Kulottunga-II enroofed the *Perambalam* and hence this was completed during this period. The bronzes of this temple adorn this *sabhā* now.

*Raja Sabhā* : (1000 pillared hall—12th and 13th century A.D.)

This majestic *sabhā* is of Royal elegance as the name itself indicates. Like *Nṛtta sabhā*, this is also a hypo style hall of 340′×190′ dimensions—standing on a plinth of 15′ high facing south. The plinth mouldings are *Upāna Kampa*, *Padma*, *Jagati*- a portion on which different dancing poses with drummers in good reliefs are carved. This is canopied by a *Kapota Chaitya kūḍu* designs of later chola period are found over this. Above this is a *paṭṭā* in which a series of tigers is carved. The upper tier of the plinth contains *Padma*, *Kumuda* a series of *Gaṇas* captioned by *Kapota* and a *Paṭṭikā* with the series of tigers. The plinth mouldings stop here. Above this plinth, huge granite pillars of 16′ high are arranged 24 rows in width by 41 in length making 984 in total. In the front half 2×14 rows of pillars in the centre, have been omitted and in the rear half 2×12 rows in the centre, have been omitted. With this and with the omission of four pillars in the front porch and two pillars in the middle, the total omission becomes 58. This omission gives a vast space in the middle, the rear half again standing on a plinth of 4′ high. The moulding of this plinth is adorned by a series of leographs.

This platform stops with the 40th row from the front, thereby forming a *pradakṣiṇa patha* around the sanctum. Both the front half, the central space and the rear half of the central space have been roofed with the brick vaults formed of radiating arches. The outside roof is in accordance with the internal one and thus this is a gigantic imitation of the wooden roof of the other *sabhās*. There is a miniature *gopura* in the front. Three more double-vaulted roofs are added to this *maṇṭapa* in front, in the central and in the rear sanctum.

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With this and with the four double-vaulted roofs over the side aisles the total super structures amount to fifteen.

In fine, the visitors may be obsessed with the view of the forest of huge granite pillars that are erected here in the hall. But this is amply compensated by the elegance of its majestic art. The figure executed in some of these pillars are rare sculptures of Hindu Iconography. Another striking feature is the most elegantly carved elephants against the face of the plinth. There are eight elephants four in the western and four in the eastern. Treated magnificently, each elephant is 10′ high and is either chasing a man or uprooting a tree. The date of the building is the early part of 13th century A.D. In front there is a *maṇṭapa*, probably a later addition. The on-looker will wonder not merely at its majestic proportions, but at the mystery of conveyanace adopted to shift these granite huge rocks which are required for construction, the nearest quarry being about forty miles from here.

## C. MEDIEVAL SHRINES

*Mīnakṣi Sundereśvara Temple*:

In the western banks of Śivaganga tank, facing east is the Mīnākṣi Sundareśvara temple. In plan it is a *garbha griha* and an *ardhamaṇṭapa* fronted by a *mukha maṇṭapa*. The plinth mouldings are *Upāna*, *Padma*, *Jagati*, a *tripaṭṭa Kumuda* and a *kanṭha*. The *kumuda* is pierced by a *pranāla*. *Jangha* part is a plain wall with two niches both in southern and northern sides and one in the rear side. A *vyalavāri* adorns the *Jangha*. A super structure confined to *garbha griha* only, is a double vaulted roof in brick and mortar imitating the *cit-sabhā*. The main shrine is a linga. Architecturally the *Chaitya Kūḍus* and *Vyalavāri* resemble the late chola's type. With this and with the name of the shrine in the inscriptions as Mināḳṣi Sundareśvara, we can ascribe the date of construction as 13th century

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A.D., when the Pandyas contributed much to this temple, probably, a representation of Mathurai shrine.

*Hundred Pillared Hall* : (12th century A.D.)

Adjacent to Minākṣi-Sundareśvara temple (Fig 1-12) in the third *prākāra*, is the hundred pillared hall of moderate dimensions (155′×75′). This is also another hypo style hall standing on a plinth of 6′ high. The hall faces east but is accessible through a flight of steps from southern side also. Over the plinth six rows of pillars in width and 15 rows in length are arranged leaving 25′ in the middle. With this, two *maṇṭapas* in eastern side and southern side are added. The rear four rows of pillars again stand on a plinth of 3½′ height with a small *pīṭha* in the centre, thus converting this hall into a *Raṅga*. The central space has been roofed by radiating arches with brick. The front *maṇṭapa* and the side *maṇṭapas* both are roofed with a double vaulted roof and a miniature *gopura* in front. Regarding the date of this building, inscriptions record it as the contribution of Naraloka Vira (12th century A.D.). The slim cylindrical columns with the simple early Chola capital is a unique elegance of the hall and no monotonous view of the pillars is felt, as it is in the case of thousand pillared hall.

*Śivakāma Sundari Amman Temple* :

Known as Tiru Kāmakkoṭṭam in the inscriptions, the Śivakāma Sundarī Amman shrine is an indepedent unit, just adjacent to hundred pillared hall towards its north. The proper shrine with the *garbha griha* and *ardhamaṇṭapa* was constructed by Naraloka Vira, a feudatory under Kullottunga-I and Vikrama Chola. The sanctum facing east, is square in plan (25×25′) and the *ardhamaṇṭapa* is a rectangle (35×25′). The *Jagati* of the *Vimāna* is now buried under a platform erected in the renovations done during in 19th century A.D. Two niches each in southern and northern outer walls and one in the rear wall have the figures of different *sakties*. The super structure confined to the sanctum is that one resembling *cit-sabhā* and is a wooden ceiling covered with copper plates. Three golden

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pinacles adorn the *śikhara*. The space between this and the *prākāra* wall (170×120′) is roofed by adding pillars in between and leaving an aisle. This complex is fronted by a huge *maṇṭapa* of singular elegance, "the outer aisles are 6′ in width and next 8′ but the architect reserved all his power for the centre aisle, which measures 21′×6″ in width, making the whole 50′ or thereabouts. In order to roof this, without employing stones of such dimensions as would crush the supports, recourse was had to vaulting or rather bracketing shafts and these brackets were again tied together by transverse purlins, all in stone and the system was reduced to a dimension that could easily be spanned.[1] The pillars of this *maṇṭapa* bear some of the rare sculptures of Hindu Iconography in good relief. Among them the noteworthy is a sixteen armed Mahiṣāsura Mardinī carved in high relief. Two figures with folded hands invite the visitors in the front two pillars, probably the portriat sculptures of the donors. The ceiling of the side aisles are painted with the narration of the advent of Śiva's dance at Chidambaram. The paintings and the *maṇṭapa* can be attributed to Nāyakas' period (17th century A.D.). The entire complex is enclosed by a double storeyed collanded *maṇṭapa* of late Chola period. The plinth of this *maṇṭapa* possesses very rare dancing figures in good relief. The front majestic entrance with a miniature super structure was constructed by Kulottunga II.

*Pandya Nāyaka Temple* : (13th century A.D.)

Situated in the north western corner of the *Prākāra* adjacent to the northern *gopura* is the Pandya Nāyaka temple. In fact it is a culmination of the simple *sabhā* into a sanctum. The shrine faces east. In plan it a *grabha griha* fronted by a hypo style hall. The hall stands on a plinth of 7′ high, the plinth mouldings being *Upāna*, *Padma*, *Kampa*, *Jagati* —a portion on which different dancing figures are carved, a *paṭṭika*, *Kampa*, again a *Padma*, *Vṛtta Kumuda*, *Uttara Pattika*, represented as *Vyālavāri* and *Kaṇṭha*. A *Kapota* covers these

1. Fergusson—History of Indian and Eastern Architecture, Vol. I, Page 371.

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mouldings. A series of *vyālics* adorns the plinth An interesting feature is that number of mineret towers in plaster intersect the upper part of the plinth in a regular interval of 4′ width. A flight of steps leading to the hall is flanked by elephants on both sides.

The hypo style hall contains three parts namely, the front, the middle and centre *maṇṭapas*. The front *maṇṭapa* contains four rows of pillars in width by two rows in length. This is followed by a middle *maṇṭapa* which contains eight rows of pillars in width by three rows in length. The central hall like the hundred pillared hall, contains three rows of pillars on either side leaving a central space of 25′. There are six such rows. All these pillars are of granite and very intricately carved. The central space is roofed by a double vaulted roof formed by radiating arch in brick and mortar. The inner roof contains contemporary paintings depicting the scenes from *Shānda puraṇa*. The plan of the sanctum which stands on a platform on the rear side of this *maṇṭapa* is *grabha griha*, the *ardhamaṇṭapa* and *pradakṣiṇa patha*. The main deity *Kāritikeya* is a majestic figure 8′ high flanked by Valli and Devayanai, his concorts. The super structure confined to the *garbha griha* is that one resembling the Śivakāmi Amman temple (wooden ceiling covered with copper plates).

*Śivagaṅgā tank* :

The antiquity of the tank goes back to 6th century A.D. when Hirayavarma is said to have renovated it. However, it was during Naraloka Vira's time (12th century A.D.) that the banks were well constructed. To-day the *abhiṣeka* water can be drained outside by a closed channel extending upto 1.5 kms. A shrine of Śiva Linga known as Jambukesvarar (plate 1-23) is installed on the western banks of the tank.

## D. OTHER SHRINES

*First Prākāra* :

The lower tier of the corridor around *cit-sabhā* contains

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many niches in which a number of shrines were installed. The western corridor contains the Nṛtta Gaṇapati Lingodbhava and Ṣaṇmukha (Subrahmanya) shrines. The north western corner is converted into a *palli-arai*, a place where the final worship in the temple is performed at 10 P.M. This is an ancient sanctum affixed with modern marble veneer. By the side of the *palli-arai*, a flight of steps leads the visitors to the upper tier where the *ākāśa* liṅgam is consecrated. The northern corridor consists of the shrine of Bhikṣāṭana. In the north eastern corner is the shrine of kṣetrapāla (Bhairava). The open eastern corridor contains the shrines of Tiru Mūvar (Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar), Sun and Moon. Adjacent to *cit-sabhā* towards its east is the shrine of Brahma—Candeśvara. Brahma and Candeśvara occupy the sanctum. The super structure is a *nāgara vimāna*. This is relatively modern.

*Govindarāja shrine* :

Just adjacent to Naṭarāja shrine facing east is the shrine of Viṣṇu known as Govindarāja. Tamil literature names this as 'Tiru Chitrakūtam'. The Puṇḍarīkapura māhātmya mentions the visit of Viṣṇu to Chidambaram, to witness Śiva's delightful dance. The visitors can view cosmic dance, the representation of dynamic power and the divine slumber of Viṣṇu, the representation of static power simultaneously.

Originally the proper shrine of Viṣṇu, in reclining form was on a raised platform resembling a *Raṅga*, in south western corner of the first *prākāra*. There are inscriptional evidences to conclude that Kulottunga-II removed the shrine which was later consecrated at lower Tirupati by Śri Ramānujacharya (circa 1025 A.D ). Later Vijayanagara kings, reinstalled a new idol and consecrated it. Many renovations were done during the period of the Nāyak also. Noteworthy among them is the renovation done by Kṛṣṇappa Nāyaka of Gingee in 1567 A.D.

To-day the shrine is a *garbha griha*, *ardhamaṇṭapa* and a *pradakṣiṇa patha* with a front porch. The *garbha griha* is a stylised *Ranga* where Viṣṇu in *reclining* form is installed. He is with four arms, the rear hands holding conch and wheel, and

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the front two hands are as usual in other reclining sculptures of Viṣṇu. The *Vimāna* is a *sāla śikhara* according to the prescriptions in the *āgamas*. Both are *Pradakṣiṇa patha* and the front porch are roofed completely now. A raised platform in the northern *Pradakṣiṇa patha* is converted into different sanctums by bifurcating walls. In these sanctums different Vaishnavite shrines are installed. They are as follows :

From left to right : Sri Narasimha mūrti, Śri Veṇugopāla, Sri Patañjali accompanied by a sage, Garudā, Viṣṇu on Garuda. In the southern *Pradakṣiṇa patha* two feet of Viṣṇu representing Rāma are installed.[1] In front, the shrines of Viṣvaksena and Hanumān are seen.

*Second Prākāra* :

*Sri Mahalakṣmi Temple* : This is otherwise known as Tāyār Sannidhi. Towards the west of *Nṛtta sabhā* is the Māhalakṣmi shrine. It is a shrine to accomodate the consort of Govindarāja. In plan it is a sanctum, an *ardhamaṇṭapa* with a *pradakṣiṇa patha* fronted by a *mukha maṇṭapa*. The vimāna is *Dravida vimāna*. The main idol is Mahalakṣmi seated in *Padmāsana* with four hands, the rear two hands holding *Padma* and the front right is in *abhaya* and the left in *varada* poses. The front maṇṭapa and the *Pradakṣiṇa patha* all contain early chola capitals.

*Mūlasthāna* : Occupying the major portion of the northern part of the second *prākāra* facing east is the shrine called Mūlasthāna. Literature attributes the earliest date to this shrine stating that patañjali and Vyāghrapāda worshipped a Svyambhu linga here. In plan it is a *grabha griha*, *Ardhamaṇṭapa* and *maha maṇṭapa*. The *pranāla* of the *garbha griha* is in a level lower than the *Upāna* indicating the existance of the shrine even earlier than the construction of the plinth. The

1. It is believed by Vaiṣnavites that this place being Tiru-Chithrakūṭam, Rāma revealed his supreme divine form as Viṣṇu to Hanumān.

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plinth mouldings are *Upāna*, *Padma*, *Kampa*, and *Kapota*. This plinth forms a *vedikā*. The plain wall of the sanctum is adorned with the series of leographs. The super structure is a wooden *sāla śikhara* resembling that one over *cit-sabhā* and is covered with copper plates. Stylistically, the *grabha griha* belongs to early chola period. The *ardhamaṇṭapa* and the *mahāmaṇṭapā* were added later.

*Umā Pārvatī* : Co-eval with the Mūlasthāna, facing south is the Umā Pārvati shrine erected just after the *Mūlasthāna*. It is a *grabha griha* and *Ardhamaṇṭapa*. The super structure is similar to that one over *Mūlasthāna*. The common *mukhamaṇṭapa* was constructed during 19th century A.D. This complex is to-day buried under a platform raised against the plinth. In the southern side we find over this platform the idols of Vallabha Ganpati and Dakṣināmurti facing south, installed as *parivāra devatās*. Towards the north east of the Mūlasthāna shrine is a Candeśvara shrine having a *drāvida vimāna* of modern period. Attached to the inner facade of the second *prākāra* wall, towards the north of the *Mūlasthāna*, a raised platform is erected over which the idols of sixty three Nāyanmars and other significant devotees are installed.[1]

*Third Prākāra* :

*Mukkuruni Vināyaka* : This is a shrine of huge Ganeśa with a sanctum and *ardhamāṇṭapa* fronted by a *mukhamaṇṭapa*. The *maṇṭapa* consists of four rows of pillars. The two side rows are extended around the sanctum, forming the *Pradakṣiṇa patha*. In contrast with the other sanctums of the temple which contain plain door lintels, this sanctum bears a figure of Gajalakṣmi flanked by Ganeśa and Subrahmaṇya on both sides. The sculpture of Ganeśa is a monolithic figure of 7′ height, with usual attributes. The outer walls were decorated with plaster and flutted pillars. The super structure is a *dravida vimāna* with three pinnacles adorning the *vimāna*. In the *mukhamaṇṭapa* many noteworthy sculptures are carved on the base of the pillars in good relief. Among them significant

1. A list in order is given in Appendix_II.

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sculptures are Heremba Ganapati and Ganeśinī. This can be taken as a contribution of the Nayakas.

*Vira Subrahmaṇya* : This is a *maṇṭapa* erected against a niche in the inner facade of west *gopura*. It is a modern edifice.

*Nava liṅgam* : In front of the Pandya Nāyaka temple towards the north of Śivagangı tank is the Navaliṅga shrine. In the recent renovation it is completely rebuilt. It is also believed that the navagrahas worshipped the nine liṅgas each individually here. The principle liṅga known as Āditya liṅga is in the centre surrounded by eight more all round. All have a common roof, but they have indepedent super structures of Dravida vimāna.

## E. SUBSIDIARY STRUCTURES

*Kitchen of Naṭarāja Temple or Mada Palli* : In the south eastern corner of the second *prākāra* the kitchen of Natarāja temple is located. This is on a raised platform much altered during the recent renovations. In the front is a shrine of Annapūrna representing prosperity and plenty. It is a hall with an open porch in the centre.

*Kitchen-2* : To the south of Mahālakṣmi shrine is the kitchen of Govindarāja temple. It is an early chola *maṇṭapa* converted into a kitchen during 17th century A.D.

*Kitchen-3* : In the north eastern corner of Śivakāma Sundarī shrine is kitchen number three. It is also a *maṇṭapa* with an open porch in the centre.

*Dhvaja Stambha* : In front of *cit-sabhā* facing Natarāja in the second *prākāra* is the wooden *dhvaja stambha* (1-31) of Nataraja. It is erected on a plinth of 5′ height. It has a square base and round column with the ribs at a regular interval of 2′. It is covered with gold gilded copper plates. (Fig 2-57)

*Dhvaja Stambha-2*. (Fig. 2-57) In front of Govindarāja shrire facing Govindarāja is the copper plated *dhvoja stambha*, resembling the one in front of *cit-sabhā*.

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*Dhvaja Stambha-3.* It is in the front maṇṭapa of Śivakāmī temple. It is covered with gold gilded copper plates.

*Dhvaja Stambha-4.* In front of Pandya Nāyaka Subrahmaṇya temple, one more copper plated *dhvaja stambha* is installed.

## F. WELLS

There are a number of wells within the temple premises. Among them some important wells are described below :

*Well-1.* (*Fig. 2—69*). Just adjacent to *cit-sabhā*, to the east of *cit-sabhā*, is the well-1. Chidambara Māhātmya names this as Paramānanda Kūpam. It is constructed with circular granite rings. The parapet is a square granite structure.

*Well-2* (*Fig. 2-48*). To the east of Umā Pārvatī (Umayāl) shrine is the well-2, known as Mūlananda Kūpam. This is similar to Paramānanda Kūpam on a bigger scale.

*Well-3.* In the first *prākāra* of Śivakāma Sundarī shrine in the north eastern corner is a well dug deep to supply water during all seasons.

Apart from these all the kitchens also have wells. All these wells are intended for pūja and cooking purposes. The fourth prākāra gardens also have wells for watering the flower plants.

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# 3

# GOPURAS

*GOPURAS* : Inscriptions associate the construction of east and south *gopuras* with Kopperunjiñga (circa 1257 A.D.), west *gopuras* with Jaṭa Varman Sundara Pandya I (1251-1268 A.D.), and north *gopura* with Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya (1516 A.D.) But considering the shapes of such features as *cornices* and *Kūḍus* we can take the west *gopura* as the earliest and then east, south and north in the order of date.[1] On the same ground we can conclude that the lower stone portion of the north *gopura* was built during 13th century A.D. Probably, Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya might have added a super structure and commissioned the entrance. There are very few differences in the architectural components of these *gopuras*. The height also varies from 135′ to 140′. In plan, there is a negligible difference of 10′ in both width and length.

*Discription* : In plan all these gopuras are rectangular with a passage of about 16′ in the middle. Actually these entrances divide the *gopura* into two rectangular sections of equal magnitude. These passage ways through the *gopuras* are paved with the large uneven blocks of stones. There are two *dvāras* at the centre of this entrance with two huge monolithic jambs on both sides. The lintal is a single stone in all the *gopuras* Four bolt holes adjacent to these lintels indicate the

1. East and South gopuras bear the late Cholas *Chaitya Kuḍus* while the south bear the Pandya. For detailed study—'Temple gateway in the South India' by J.C. Harle, London, 1963.

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provision of door to these entrances. This fact is further strengthened by the existance of large blocks of stone with holes, for bolts affixed to the inner sides of the outer door-way jambs.

The rectangular ceiling of the central portion of the entry way has been intricately carved into a grill forming small squares, with small figures in each of these squares. On both sides of these entry-ways two vestibules provide space for access to the stairs leading to the upper storeys of the *gopura*. In elevation these vestibules are divided into upper and lower tiers, by a heavy and elaborate cornice marking the division between the two floors. In each case, a column supports the cornice and in turn a second column supports the simple entablature near the ceiling. Both in outer and inner facades tall decorated plasters, four on each side and all equidistant from each other line the walls of the entry ways. One of the plasters of the inner facades in all the gopuras is left plain. Again from the bottom a space about 2½′ is left plain in all the cases. Each plaster is divided into eight compartments[1] of equal size (15″ sq.), each topped by *kapota*, a miniture *vāli* frieze and a *paṭṭa*. Each of these compartments contains a figure of donseause flanked by two figurers, a drummer and a man keeping rhythm, all carved in bas reliefs. These are the noteworthy illustrations of 108 *karaṇas* of *Bharata Nātya Sastra* (Plate No. VI). Another interesting feature is that all the figures are labelled in the east and west *gopuras* in Sanskrit verses below the compartment in grantha script.[2] The first and the third *kapotas* of the two middle plasters are extended to meet internally forming a niche in between.

In these niches the portrait sculptures of the donors are installed. A real life has been infused into these Bas-reliefs and a visitor is spell bound to notice the fineness achieved on the granite. The walls of the entry-ways bear many incriptions.

1. Nine in the case of west *gopura*.
2. For detailed study—Nātya Sāstra. Ed. by M. Rāmakṛṣṇa Kavi, Baroda, 1956.

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In elevation, all the four facades of these *gopuras* are the same. The granite stone portion of these *gopuras* apparantly look like a structure with two storeys. In fact it is the *upa-pīṭha*, that has been enlarged to a greater extent, so as to recognise this as a separate tier. This *upa-pīṭha*, has its own component parts namely *Upana*, *Padma*. *Kumuda*, *Paṭṭa* and *Kanṭha* (a *Bhūta frieze*). Over this is the *adhiṣṭhana* with the components *Upana*, a high *Jagati*, *Kumuda*, *Paṭṭa* in the form of a kapota and an *Urdhva Paṭṭa*. A Yāli frieze decorates the *paṭṭa*. In plan corresponding to the bays of the main storey, there is a series of projecting pavilion niches. With this there are really small shallow pavilions containing niches. The bases of these niches are distinct in many ways. The Pavalion niches are surmounted by *sālās* and narrower by the *Kuḍus*. Bas relief figures of elephants in profile at the exterior corners add additional beauty to the sub-base.

The main storey is nothing but the repetition of the sub-base on a slightly smaller scale. But instead of projected pavilion niches and hallow pavilion niches we find the bays and recesses of varying widths. All the bays contain niches while the recesses contain *Kumbha Panjarams*. All these sub-bay niches and the main storey niches contain mostly remarkable Hindu Iconographic forms.

Detailed study of these sculptures with respect to their positions in the *gopuras* is still in desideratum. However, the significant inner and outer facade sculptures of both upper and lower tiers are given below as *gopura* wise. To avoid repitition similar sculptures once described are left without description.

EAST GOPURAS : (Plate II) : Breadth 107′ 6″, length 66′ and height 135′.

*Outer facade* : *Lower tier from left to right to the visitor* :—

No. 1. Empty
No. 2. Gaṅga : A female figure standing in tribhanga.

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From its relative position in the other *gopuras* it is concluded as Gaṅga even in the absence of makara below. Probably it is unfinished.

No. 3. Nāga : Nāga is depicted in the human form with a hood of four serpents above. His two front hands are in *añjali* pose. Two more nāgas accompany the main one.

No. 4. Ṛṣi : The Ṛṣi is depicted with a huge mattress. His right hand is in Vyākhyāna mudra and in the left he holds a book. This may probably be a sculpture of Agastya.

No. 5. Empty

No. 6. Indra : Indra is riding on his elephant Iravata. In the rear left hand he holds a *tanka*, in the rear right a *vajra*. Front right hand is in *abhaya* and left is in *Varada*.

No. 7&8 Dvārapālas : All the dvārapālas in the lower tier niches are similar. They flank both the inner and outer facades. They are four armed squat male figures. They lean upon a large club placed on the side nearest to the entry passage of the *gopuras*. Similarly the respective front hand rests on the club. The two rear hands are in *vismaya* and *abhaya*. In the outer facades the remaining front hand is in *tarjanī hasta* and in the case of inner facades it is placed on the hip.

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No. 9. Sūrya : The unique sculpture of Surya is depicted with three faces and eight hands. He stands on Sama bhanga and wears *karanda mukṭva*. In the right rear hand he holds a rosary and in the left a *pāśa*. In the next pair the holds Padmas (Lotuses). Clubs are found in the next pair of hands, the right front hand is being in *abhaya* and left is broken. Below him is a chariot. Only one wheel is visible in profile with a charioteer beseated in Padmāsana. It is also considered as representing the composite[1] form of Brahma, Maheśvara and Viṣṇu.

No. 10. Empty

No. 11. Ṛṣi

No. 12. Candeśvara : A devotee of Śiva honoured on part with Śiva is depicted as candeśvaras.[2] The three faced Candeśvara figure has three eyes and four arms. In rear right he holds an axe and in the left a śūla. Lower hands are broken.

No. 13. Yamunā : The tribhaṅga figure of Yamunā stands on a tortoise. In her left hand she holds a flower and the right hand is broken.

No. 14. Bhairava : Otherwise known as Kṣetrapāla, is a naked figure with eight hands. He is decorated with a flame of hair standing on end. In the rear right hand he holds a sword and in the second from the rear

1. M.K. Sastri, South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses, Madras 1916 (Page No. 236).
2, Periya Purāṇam—Chapter XXI.

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on the left a small shield. Behind the image in good relief, a standing dog is shown. To the right a bhūta with fierce look is carved.

*Upper tier—from left to right* :—

No. 1. Gajāsura-Sumhāramurti : Śiva vanquishing a demon in the form of an elephant is depicted in this panel. He is shown as tearing the elephant into two pieces and wearing his skin as his upper garment. The two legs and the head of the elephant remain under his left foot and the other two legs and tail remain above his head. The skin is shown as prabhāmaṇḍala. Pārvatī is carved to his left holding skanda. Śiva wears two circular rings. The ferocious stare of Śiva and the sacred look of Pārvatī are the two supreme beauties of this sculpture.

No. 2. Chandraśekhara: This representation of Śiva is with four hands, the rear ones holding the axe and the deer. The front right hand is in *abhya* and the left is in *varada* pose.

No. 3. Somāskanda : This central attractive panel is a marvallous sculpture of Śiva with his consort Pārvatī and Skanda. Śiva's left front hand is in the *simha karaṇa* position. Skanda is depicted against the base of the thorne.

No. 4&5 Dvārapālas : The upper tier dvārapālas are typical late chola sculptures in all characteristics. All the outer facades are flanked by dvārapālas. Against the outer

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facades of the south and west *gopura*, shrines are built. They stand with one leg raised and flung across the body. The foot is placed on the blade of a huge axe which he holds with one of his hands. *Tarjanī*, *Vismaya* and *abhaya* are the poses of the remaining hands generally. They have three eyes and tusks. A ferocious expression is given to these sculptures.

No. . Bhikṣaṭana : This is a pictorial depiction of Śiva in the guise of Bhikṣaṭana. He is naked and wears a *Jaṭābhāra*. The well carved sandal, on which he stands, is another grandeur.

No. 7. Ardhanārī : This composite sculpture of Śiva and Śakti is another noteworthy figure found in all the four *gopuras*. It is three armed and the masculine part is depicted in the right and the feminine beauty in the left. The right part is with two hands and the left with a single hand. He leans on a bull standing beside him. Pārvatī holds a *nilotpala*.

No. 8. Tripurāntaka : Śiva bears the conventional emblems in his upper hands. He holds a bow in his left front hand and an arrow in the right front hand. His left leg is raised and placed on a dwarf figure. Pārvatī stands on his left side. On the base is a seated Brahma carved in relief.

*Inner facade—Lower tiers from left to right* :—

1. Manmatha Two armed figure or Manmatha (God of Love) stands in *abhanga*. He holds a flower arrow in his right hand and a

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long bow (Sugar cane ?) in his left. He is flanked by two female attendants.

2. Ṛṣi : His right hand is in *Vyākhyānamudrā* with a rosary of beeds. The left arm is broken.

3. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa : Viṣṇu is beseated on garuḍa with four hands. In the rear hands he has discus and conch. The front hands are broken. Garuḍa is on his right knee and is holding his hands as supports for Viṣṇu's feet.

4. Śrīdevī : In the rear hands she holds *Padmas* and the front hands are broken.

5. Mahiṣāsura mardini: This is the delineation of the war scene between Mahiṣāsura demon (demon having the head of a buffalo) and śakti. She is with eighteen hands. In one pair of hands she holds conch and wheel. With one of her right hands she is pulling an arrow from a quiver behind her shoulder, while in the corresponding left she holds a bow. Remaining hands are mutilated. Almost under the goddess stands a lion. A prostrate Mahiṣāsura in the form of a human body and a buffalo's head is below the feet of the Goddess. The Goddess stands on the left foot of the asura and the right foot is placed on his shoulders. He holds a knife in one of his hands. An interesting thing is the lion behind her is depicted as biting the asura. This is one of the most remarkable representations of Mahiṣāsura murdini on a moderate scale.

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6. Graha : Probably one of the navagrahas is represented with his right hand in *abhaya*. The left hand is placed on his hips.

7. Dvārapāla

8. Dvārapāla

9. Empty

10. Empty

11. Empty

12. Brahma : Three faced and four handed figure of Brahma is seated on swan. He is in *Paryaṅkāsana*. His front pair of hands are in *añjali* pose and in the rear left he holds a rosary and in the left a pot (Kamaṇḍala).

13. Empty

14. Empty

*Upper tier—from left to right* :—

1. Vṛṣavāhana mūrti or Vṛṣabhantika : This is one of the delightful representations of Śiva with four hands. He stands with his left leg straight, right bent at the knee. On his right is the bull standing majestically being proud of the master. On his left is Pārvatī. Śiva's left front hand is on hip. Probably his right front hand rests on the head of the bull. His rear hands hold axe and deer.

2. Lingodbhava : Once Śiva manifested Himself in the form of cosmic fire to settle a dispute between Viṣṇu and Brahma regarding

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their superiority. Beholding this fire, Viṣṇu and Brahma started to find out the bottom and the top of the form respectively. Viṣṇu assumed the form of boar and burrowed down to the earth while Brahma on a swan flew up in the air. Their attempts were futile and they realized the superiority of Śiva. This incident is depicted as Lingodbhava. The figure of Śiva is carved infront of a linga. Only the portion upto his knee is visible. Viṣṇu in human form with a boar's head plunges down on the lower left hand side of the lingam. Brahma depicted as a bird occupies the top right hand corner. The notable feature is that the opening in the lingam is bordered with flames.

3. Kankāla : One of the ugra forms of Śiva is represented as Kankāla. This is a most interesting image in this *gopura*, on account of the vivid delineation of this scene. Śiva in the centre is flanked by two women on either side. Infront of them there are two bhūtas. Above Śiva, in a pair of small platforms projecting from the back of the nich are groups of nude women. Śiva carries a long handed trident over his shoulder. The front two hands are engaged in playing a damaru (drum). The upper right hand is stretched straight in which a skull is hanging.

4. Nandīśa : The entrances of the inner facades of all *Gopuras* are flanked by Nandīśa figures. The attributes on the rear hands

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are that of Śiva, namely *Paraśu* and *Mṛga* (axe and deer). In the front right hand, he holds a *śūla* and in the left a *kapāla*.

5. Nandīśa

6. Kalyāṇa Sundara : In this panel the divine wedding scene of Śiva with Pārvatī is carved picturesquely. Śiva stands in abhaṅga with two hands. To his right is Pārvatī depicited with a feminine banishment. Below him and to his left is seated Brahma shown in profile. Above Brahma is standing Viṣṇu with his usual attributes. Pārvatī stretches out her right hand which is grasped by Siva's right hand. Śiva's left hand is in *Varada*.

7. Hari-Hara : In this the right part is depicted with Śiva's emblem and left with Viṣṇu's. In the rear right hand he holds an axe and the front right hand is in *abhaya*. In the rear right hand he has conch, the front left hand is placed on the hip.

8. Svayamvara of Kalayāṇa Sundara mūrti : This is a unique type of Kalyāṇa Sundara sculpture where only Śiva and Pārvati are depicted omitting other Gods like Viṣṇu and Brahma. Śiva bears the usual emblem in his rear hands, Pārvatī stands to his left, with her left hand in ālola. Śiva with his front right arm holds the object in Pārvatī's right hand. The front left arm of Śiva is placed around Pārvatī's body.

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SOUTH GOPURA.[1] Breadth 106′ 5″, length 65′ 5″ and height 137′.

*Outer facade—Lower tiers from left to right* :—

1. Bhadra Kālī : The eight armed figure of Bhadra Kālī stands with her right leg raised and placed on *asura* (demon) all her hands and part of her right leg are broken. Behind *asura* is a female bhuta like figure.

2. Gaṅga : The two handed female figure of Gaṅga stands on a makara. Both her arms are broken.

3. Nāga

4. Graha

5. Empty

6. Empty

7. Dvārapāla

8. Dvārapāla

9. Ṛṣi

10. Gaṇeśa : The dancing Gaṇapati is with his right leg raised. He is decorated with the sacred thread in the form of serpents. His trunk turns towards left. He is four armed. In the right back hand he holds the axe, in the left rear hand a noose. The right front hand holds a broken tusk and the left front arm is broken.

1. The same pattern is followed in giving the description of those sculptures in other *gopuras*. The sculptures described early are left without description.

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11. Yamuna
12. Candeśvara
13. Graha
14. Agni : The two headed, three-legged figure of Agni is with seven arms. He is wearing Jatamukutas backed by flames. On the left hand he holds a small trident. Two of the right hands hold flame and a spoon. A bull is carved behind Agni. (Plate-VIII)

*Upper tier—from left to right* :—

1. Gajasmhāra Mūrti
2. Candraśekhara
3. Kaṅkāla
4. Dvārapāla
5. Dvārapāla
6. Bhikṣāṭana
7. Ardhanārī
8. Tripurāntaka : Śiva holds the conventional emblems in the rear hands. In addition to this in the front right hand he holds an arrow and in the front left a great bow. Pārvatī stands by the side of Śiva in dvibanga. Below is his chariot in which a wheel and many horses are depicted in bas-reliefs. Brahma (?) has been further depicted as the charioteer.

*Inner facade—Lower tier from left to right* :—

1. Iśāna : The guardiah of the north eastern quarter is depicted as two armed figure. His right hand is in *abhya* and left is missing. He stands against the bull facing right.

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2. Ṛṣi
3. Viṣṇu on Garuda
4. Śrī Devi
5. Mahiṣāsura Mardini
6. Kubera : This is a two armed sculpture in *abhanga* pose. The right hand is in *abhaya* and the left holds a club. The figure on the base is missing.
7. Dvārapāla
8. Dvārapāla
9. Candra : The two armed figure of Candra stands against a high oval aureole. In both hands he holds lotuses (?).
10. Subrahmaṇya : This image is inside the shrine built up against this facade. He is riding on a peacock and is twelve armed. He wears a quiver of arrows at his back. A great bow is held in the left front hand while the corresponding right hand is shown as discharging the arrows. The rest of the hands bear many attributes.
11. Sarasvatī : The four armed figure of Sarasvatī is depicted in padmāsana. She is seated on a lotus throne. In the rear hands she holds a rosary in the right and a pot in the left. The front arms are broken.
12. Brahma
13. Graha
14. Durgā : This is an eight armed figure of Śakti standing on a buffalo's head. All the hands are broken.

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*Inner facade—Upper tier from left to right* :—

1. Vṛṣabhāntika
2. Lingodhava
3. Somāskanda
4. Nandīsa
5. Nandīsa
6. Kalyāṇasundara
7. Hari Hara
8. Svayamvara

WEST GOPURA — Breadth 101′, length 60′ and height 134′

*Outer facade—Lower tier* :—

(A noteworthy feature of the lower tier sculptures is that most of them are labelled in grantha script).

1. Bhairva
2. Gaṅga
3. Candeśvara
4. Dhanvantari : This is a figure resembling Ṛṣi in other *gopuras* but labelled as Dhanvantari.
5. Mahiṣāsura mardinī : A figure of goddesses vanquishing demon is depicted, but labelled as tripura, probably meaning Tripura Sundara-Devi.
6. *Śukra* : One of the grahas is represented in sama-bhanga. His left hand is on his hip. The right is broken. It is labelled as Śukran.
7. Dvārapāla
8. Dvārapāla

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9. Karpaka Vināyaka : This Natya Gaṇapati shrine is considered as the Kṣetra Gaṇapati.
10. Gaṇapati
11. Unidentified
12. Nāga
13. Yamunā : This is labelled as Yamunai a Tamil form of Yamunā.
14. Bhadra Kāli : This is similar to that one found in the outer facade of the south gopura and labelled as Bhadra Kāli.

*Upper tier—left to right* :—

1. Gaja Samahāra mūrti
2. Lingodbhava
3. Somāskanda
4. Dvārapāla
5. Dvārapāla
6. Bhikṣāṭana
7. Hari Hara
8. Tripurāntaka

*Inner facade—Lower tier* :—

1. Kāma : This is the sculpture of Manmatha and is labelled as Kāma Devan.
2. Agastya : (Plate VII) A sculpture of Ṛṣi with long beard. This is labelled as Agastian.
3. Viṣṇu on Garuda
4. Śrī Devi
5. Subrahmaṇya
6. Indra : This is labelled as Devandran.
7. Dvārapāla

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8. Dvārapāla
9. Sūrya : This is enclosed in Subrahmaṇya shrine (Fig. 1-10).
10. Subrahmaṇya : (Now inside a shrine erected recently).
11. Sarasvatī
12. Empty
13. Viśvakarmā : Another sculpture resembling Ṛṣi with two hands. This is labelled as Viśvakarman.
14. Durgā : This is labelled as Durgā Devi.

*Upper tier—left to right* :—

1. Gangādhara : The descent of Ganga river from the heaven is depicted in this scene. The rear right hand of Śiva holds up the lock of hair in which a figure of Gaṅga is carved. The left hand holds a mṛga (deer). With the front two hands he is pacifying Pārvatī who seems to be angry with him for sheltering another woman Gaṅga.
2. Candraśekhara
3. Kalyāṇasundara
4. Dvārapāla
5. Dvārapāla
6. Bhikṣāṭana
7. Hari-Hara
8. Tripurāntaka

NORTH GOPURA Breadth 107′ 5″, length 71′ 5″ and height 143′.

*Outer facade—Lower tier from left to right* :—

1. Iśāna
2. Gaṅga

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3. Candeśvara
4. Ṛṣi
5. Mahiṣāsura Mardini
6. Kubera
7. Dvārapāla
8. Dvārapāla
9. Candra
10. Gaṇapati
11. Graha
12. Nāga
13. Yamunā
14. Agni

*Upper tiers* :—

1. Gaja Samhāramurt i
2. Candraśekhara
3. Somāskanda
4. Dvārapāla
5. Dvārapāla
6. Kalyāṇasundara
7. Ardhanāri
8. Tripurāntaka

*Inner facade—Lower tier from left to right* :—

1. Manmatha
2. Ṛṣi
3. Viṣṇu on Garuda
4. Subrahmaṇya (Now inside a shrine)
5. Unidentified
6. Unidentified
7. Dvārapāla
8. Dvārapāla

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9. Graha
10. Subrahmaṇya
11. Sarasvatī
12. Brahma
13. Durga
14. Agni

*Upper tier* :—

1. Vṛṣabhantika
2. Lingodbhava
3. Kaṅkāla
4. Nandīśa
5. Nandīśa
6. Bhikṣaṭana
7. Hari-Hara
8. Svayaṁvara

Apart from these sculptures, the entryway niches of the *gopuras*, contain some significant portrait sculptures. Among them the following are noteworthy.

East gopura niches contain the sculptures of Pachaiyappa Mudaliar and his sister Suppammal, the renovators of this gopura (18th century A.D.).

West gopura niches contain two unidentified sculptures.

North gopura niches possess the famous Kṛṣṇdevaraya sculpture and two sthpatis probably the architects of the *gopuras*.

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# 4

# ART

The exteriors of the earlier *sabhās* are plain and unadorned. This is compensated in the later *sabhās* and shrines, the plinths of which are *embellished* with Prefuse sculptured reliefs especially in the *Jagati* portion. As the temple is dedicated to the dancing form of Śiva a single theme of these embellishments is "dance" of varying grades. The Cholas were great patrons of art particularly of dance. This is well reflected in this temple, which is better known as temple of temples. Their main ambition was to perpetuate the art of dance in stone to convey the delight of dance they enjoyed to future generations. The artists they engaged had chosen a granite medium to execute their master's will. The figures on the plinth of *Nṛtta sabhā* are deleberately carved as the figure of Śiva in varying dancing poses, the centre one representing Śiva playing on a five mouthed instrument (paṇchmukha vādya) (Plate-V). Except this no other dancing figure of Śiva adorns the plinths. It may be recalled here that the same school of artists had depicted Śiva, bestowing 108 *karaṇas* in Bṛhadīśvara temple in Tanjore.[1] A completed series of this is found in the eastern and western *gopuras* of the temple carved just after Tanjore, but a damsel performing the dance instead of Lord, probably, the sculptures had chosen the damsel figure because of the religeous fervour and devotion to the Lord preventing them from exhibiting the Lord, as a dancer (poser) in the exteriors, or considering the secular nature of dance, which is an Art.

1. This incomplete series consists of 81 *karaṇas* only.

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It is the general opinion that the Chola temples[1] do not owe their pre-eminence among others to their art but to the massive architecture. But a study of the sculptures here would reveal how the artists had not missed even a single opportunity to infuse life into the selected theme of dance. The sanctum has been reserved for the Lord's Supreme dance. From the outer entrance to the sanctum, the plinths of all edifices were converted into sculptural galleries. The artists delibarately for this purpose provided a high *Jagati*. In this part we find the dancing damsels of moderate size. Especially in the plinth of the corridor around the Śivakāmi Sundari temple many fascinating themes of dance are chiselled with patience and devotion by sculptors. The drapery is simple and all sculptures are less ornamented, perhaps the artists concentrated more on the *karaṇas* of the dance.

A word is necessary on the 108 *karaṇas* depicted over the plaster of the towers, especially east and west. The dexterity that is achieved on these sculptures is superb. In this respect it even excels Tanjore series. Even though depicted in relief, the damsels are with full blown ecstatic feminine beauty. Facial expression varies with *karaṇas*. In fact the sculpture gave life to the text of Bharata on *Nātya śāstra*. By labelling the text below the reliefs, they left to the appreciation of the art lovers how an excellent treatment could be given even on granite to fulfil their inherent aesthetic realization.

The dance is so supreme that the party accompanying her could not restrain from dancing with keeping rhythm. In fine, the musical instruments, the dress, the coiffure are restrained to the supreme dance which is a recurring theme in the temple.

A study of the reliefs in the plinth of *Rāja Sabhā* reveals that there is no place for convention here. Inspite of the adoption of Bharata's text we find the artists were free to render their skill in depicting the voluptous physical aspects of the

1. The earlier structures have been renovated during the Chola period, resulting that only the chola edifices remain in tact today.

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dancing damsels. The elephants carved against the plinth of *Rāja sabhā* draw our attention. The skill in assembling the elephants with different pieces of stones against the plinth, without altering the plinth moulding in any way, is of singular elegance. In the early carvings either the portriat of the king or any mortal element is absent as the art was considered Divine.

As in other schools sectional rivalry also plays a part in the carvings of some of the reliefs in the temple. Initiated by Kulottungas-II, a staunch Saivite, the thousand pillared hall was designed as a majestic elegant *sabhā* dedicated to his Lord. The huge monolithic pillars are carved with many decorative motifs. Many icons of the saivite origin adorned the centre of these pillars. Among them a playing Ganeśa (Navantia Ganeśa) is noteworthy (Plate-IX). Notwithstanding the Iconographic concept, this figure shows the transformation of Kṛṣṇa Līla into that of Ganeśa, there by accommodating the themes of Vaisnavism within Saivism. A student of art neccssarily note the artistic super structure over all the shrines.

The skill is in using the metals to cover the wooden ceilings. This is so meticulously done that they did withstand the natural calamities for the past hundreds of years. Artists of different categories namely the sculptors on gold and blacksmiths and carpenters must have worked on this premises to shape the typical edifices unlike other temples which are the contribution of generally sculptors only.

Finally a comment in respect of the contribution of the contemporary craftsman is necessary here. The impressive stone carvings converting the huge monolithic pillars in the second *prākāra* into a monumental hall of high artistic merit, with the remified capitals bearing elegantly carved *sārdulas* is far from one's expectations. Many Iconographic forms of the Hindu pantheon are carved here and there creating the same effect of the earlier carvings. In fact, here one can find the art still alive in the land of art, which the Lord himself has chosen for exhibiting his eternal dance.

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# APPENDIX I

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATIONS

### *SHRINES IN CIT-SABHĀ*

*1. Śri Naṭarāja and his significance* :

The siginficance of Śiva is manifold. The *Ānanda Tāṇḍava* of Śiva represents his five-fold activities (*pañca Kṛtya*) namely *Sṛṣṭi* (creation), *Sthiti* (preservation), *Saṁhāra* (destruction), *Tirobhāva* (Veiling) and the *Cit-sabhā* itself where he dances eternaly is the representation of the wisdom (Jñānam). The five steps leading to *cit-sabhā*, represent the five mystic letters of *Pañcākṣara mantara* namely *na, ma, si, va, ya.* The twenty eight pillars in *cit-sabhā* signify 28 holy scriptures, sixty four letters above the pillars signify sixty four arts, 21,600 golden tiles covering the roof signify 21,600 inhalations a man has a day, 72,000 nails over the tiles signify the number of pluse-beats of a man in a day, the nine golden *kalaśas* over the roof signify nine *śaktis* namely *Vāma, Jyeṣṭha, Raudra, Kālī, Kalvi-karni, Balauikarnī, Balapramadhanī, Sarva bhūtadamani* and *Manonmanī.* Naṭarāja bears a drum in his upper right hand and fire in the upper left. His front right hand is in *abhaya* and the front left hand points out the lifted left foot. The significance of his attributes is well alluded to in the Tamil poem '*unmai vilakkam*' thus : as 'His drum creates, protection proceeds from the hand of hope, from fire proceeds destruction, and from the lifted foot salvation is bestowed'.

*Śrī Śivakāma Sundari* :

It is believed that *śakti* in all three forms is represented in this temple, the shrine in *cit-sabha* is *Icha Śakti* (will). The

1. It is said that an inscription in one of the tiles mentions the total number as 21,600—Chidambaram Kumbhabhiśeka Malar—Chidambaram 1956, page 25.

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Goddess in Palli arai is *Kriyā Śakti* (action) and Śivakāma Sundari shrine in third *Prākāra* is *Jñāna śakti* (wisdom).

*Chidambara Rahasyam* :

By the side of Naṭarāja towards his left is Chidambara Rahasyam. It is a place where the invisible ākāśa is worshipped. Below a black curtain a string of golden *bilva* leaves is hung to point out that Ether is the all pervasive fifth element of the universe. It is the place where the eternal bliss dwells. Hence Chidambaram is better known as *Daharakasa Kṣetram.*[1]

*Śrī Ratna Sabhāpati* :

A miniature Naṭarāja in *Ratna* (Jewel) is worshipped at 10 A.M. daily. The advent of the shrine is said to be second manifestation of Śiva as dancing figure for the benefit of his devotees. Once all the dikṣitars (Priests of the temple) attended a *Yajña* that Brahama performed at antarvedi. At the end of the *Yajña*, Brahama offered food to those priests, which they refused to accept on the plea that without the worship of Naṭarāja, they could not accept any offer. Hence on the prayer of Brahama, Śiva manifested himself as Ratna Sabhāpati, which was brought to Chidambaram afterwards.

*Candra Moulīśvara* :

This is a miniature linga in crystal (sphaṭika). It is said that Lord Naṭarāja himself manifested in this linga to help his worshippers to offer abhiṣekams daily six times namely at 8A.M. 10 A.M., 11.30 A.M., 5 P.M., 7 P.M. and 9 P.M. It is pertinent to recall here that only six abhiṣekams are done to Naṭarāja in a year. It is also believed that Śri Ādi Śaṅkara consecrated this shrine.

1. Puṇḍarīka pura Māhātmya and Koivalyo-panisad.

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*Mukhalingam* :

Below the shrine of Rahasyam is the Mukhalingam, 'a linga having one face' known as '*tatpuruṣa mukhalingam*'.

*Siva Pāduka* :

Corresponding to the *Kriyāśakti* in the palli arai the *puruṣa* form is represented as Śiva's holy feet. It is customary to take this pāda in procession after ardhajāma Pūja (performed at 10 A.M.) and leave it in the palli arai. In the early morning the first puja is performed (7 A.M.) to these pādas and taken back to *cit-sabhā*. In fact the Pundarīka pura māhātmya speak that Chidambaram is the heart of *Virāt puruṣa* and all the manifestations of Hirayana garbha converge into this shrine during night.

*Bhairava* :

This is otherwise known as Svarnakāla Bhairvan. It is said that in olden days the copper plates kept under this diety after the night puja were transformed into gold at dawn.

*Patañjali and Vyāghrapada* :

In a two tiered niche in the south western corner of *cit-sabhā*, facing south, Patañjali and Vyāghrapada idols are installed. Being the pioneers of Śiva's dance here they are honoured with a ten days festivals prior to taipuṣya. Two bronze figures belongings to early chola period (plate-X) are taken as processional dieties.

*Bali Nāyaka* :

The idol of Chandra sekhara is taken around the second *Prākāra* daily at 9 A.M. , considering it is a daily festival.

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*Naṭarāja and Govindarāja* :

It is already mentioned that visitors can view both Naṭarāja in the form of cosmic dance and Govindarāja in the reclining form simultaneously in Chidambaram. This harmonious blend of apperently different forms makes many devotees to feel the oneness of all forms. "Viṣṇu is not awake, not asleep, nor in a dream, but in fourth state beyond all these *turīyāvasthā* beyond *jāgrat*, *svapna* and *suṣupati*. The conch in his hand symbolises ether, the sky, receptacle of sound. The sound is produced like the drum of Naṭarāja, the conch of śeṣaśāyī produces sound and this is a symbol of creation. The wheel of the flaming '*chakra*' is the symbol of destruction and transformation. It does not kill but purifies. Like the flame in Naṭarāja's hand, it is the means of rejuvaenation a new life vouchsafed after destroying dross. It is also a symbol of cycle of birth and deaths, the *māyā* of Viṣṇu the very charm of life, which revolving in an eddy, in which ignorant souls lose themselves and are saved by His grace. Comparable to this is the *Kuṇḍalī*, the snake that curls in circles, sheds slough and dons fresh skin every time. Suggesting a perennial entry into exit from life in a new and ever new phantasy of originations and demise constituting the cycle of existence. Śiva's snake encircling the hand, the ear lobe, his matted locks, his wrists his waist and even his anklets, are all *kuṇḍalas* or circlets indicative of this in the form of Naṭarāja, there is a hand around which a snake is shown encircled or he holds a reptile which entwings itself into circles. The *gadā* of Viṣṇu is the power to eliminate or destory and protect. The *gadā* is the symbol of Viṣṇu's *prabhutva*, to protect the weak and destory the evil. The hand of Śiva in *abhaya* suggests this. The hand for protection assures protection, not to the wicked but to the good.

The pleasing hue of the lotus (in the hand of Viṣṇu) is the indication of the charm of righteous life, which alone in the perception of the Almighty is life. Similarly on the case of dancing Śiva, the purest celestial river in his jaṭas, in the sweet and inviting moon in his vicinity appearing almost like a lotus

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sprung out of the water, is indication of the same aspect. Śiva crushes ignorance under foot, destrory it in whatever form it comes, whether it is like the dark monster of an elephant or hideous dwarf crushed by him. It is the symbol of overcoming evil even as he dances. In another case even as he is asleep, Viṣṇu destroys Madhu and Kaiṭabha the twin monsters of ignorance and the destruction is by just crushing them as he is still recumbent.[1]

1. C. Sivaramamurty—Naṭarāja in Art, thought and literature—New Delhi 1974—page 39-40.

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## APPENDIX II

Sixty-three Nāyanārs and other associated shrines in Second prākāra (Fig. 1-45).

| Sl. No. | Name of the Idol | Reference in Periya Purāṇam | Reference in Upamanyu Bhakta Vilāsam |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Tiru Nīlakanṭha Nāyanār | Chapter—3 | Chapter—18 |
| 2. | Iyarpagai Nāyanār | Chapter—4 | Chapter—19 |
| 3. | Ilayānkudimāra Nāyanār | Chapter—5 | Chapter—20 |
| 4. | Maiporul Nāyanār | Chapter—6 | Chapter—21 |
| 5. | Viraṅmiṅḍa Nāyanār | Chapter—7 | Chapter—22 |
| 6. | Amarnīti Nāyanār | Chapter—8 | Chapter—23 |
| 7. | Eribhakta Nāyanār | Chapter—9 | Chapter—24 |
| 8. | Enādi Nāyanār | Chapter—10 | Chapter—25 |
| 9. | Kannappa Nāyanār | Chapter—11 | Chapter—26 |
| 10. | Kunguliyakhalaya Nāyanār | Chapter—12 | Chapter—30 |
| 11. | Mānakkaṅchāra Nāyanār | Chapter—13 | Chapter—31 |
| 12. | Arivāṭṭaya Nāyanār | Chapter—14 | Chapter—32 |
| 13. | Ānāya Nāyanār | Chapter—15 | Chapter—33 |

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| Sl.No. | Name of the Idol | Reference in Pariya Purāṇam | Reference in Upamanyu Bhakta Vilāsam |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14. | Mūrti Nāyanār | Chapter—16 | Chapter—34 |
| 15. | Muruga Nāyanār | Chapter—17 | Chapter—35 |
| 16. | Rudrapaśupati Nāyanār | Chapter—18 | Chapter—36 |
| 17. | Tirunālaippovār Nāyanār | Chapter—19 | Chapter—37 |
| 18. | Tirukurippu Tonda Nāyanār | Chapter—20 | Chapter—38 |
| 19. | Chandeśvara Nayanār | Chapter—21 | Chapter—39 |
| 20. | Tirunāvukarasu Nāyanār | Chapter—22 | Chapter—40 |
| 21. | Kula Sirai Nāyanār | Chapter—23 | Chapter—44 |
| 22. | Perumiḷalai Kurumba Nāyanār | Chapter—24 | Chapter—45 |
| 23. | Kāraikāl Ammaiyār | Chapter—25 | Chapter—46 |
| 24. | Appūdiadiganāyanār | Chapter—26 | Chapter—47 |
| 25. | Tiru Nīlanakka Nāyanār | Chapter—27 | Chapter—48 |
| 26. | Naminaṅdiyadikanāyanār | Chapter—28 | Chapter—49 |
| 27. | Tirujānasambandamurti Nāyanār | Chapter—29 | Chapter—50 |
| 28. | Eyarkonkali kāma Nāyanār | Chapter—30 | Chapter—58 |
| 29. | Tirumūla Nāyanār | Chapter—31 | Chapter—62 |

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| Sl. No. | Name of the Idol | Reference in Periya Purāṇam | Reference in Upamanyu Bhakta Vilāsam |
|---|---|---|---|
| 30. | Danḍiyadikaṇāyanār | Chapter—32 | Chapter—63 |
| 31. | Mūrkha Nāyanār | Chapter—33 | Chapter—64 |
| 32. | Somāsimāra Nāyanār | Chapter—34 | Chapter—65 |
| 33. | Sakya Nāyanār | Chapter—35 | Chapter—67 |
| 34. | Sirappuli Nāyanār | Chapter—36 | Chapter—68 |
| 35. | Sirutoṇḍa Nāyanār | Chapter—37 | Chapter—69 |
| 36. | Seramanperumāl Nāyanār | Chapter—38 | Chapter—74 |
| 37. | Kaṇanātha Nāyanār | Chapter—39 | Chapter—74 |
| 38. | Kūṭṭruva Nāyanār | Chapter—40 | Chapter—75 |
| 39. | Poiyādimai Illāda Pulavar | Chapter—41 | Chapter—76 |
| 40. | Puhaḷsola Nāyanār | Chapter—42 | Chapter—77 |
| 41. | Narasiṅgamunayarai Nāyanār | Chapter—43 | Chapter—78 |
| 42. | Ati Bhahta Nāyanār | Chapter—44 | Chapter—79 |
| 43. | Kaligaṁba Nāyanār | Chapter—45 | Chapter—80 |
| 44. | Kaliya Nāyanār | Chapter—46 | Chapter—81 |
| 45. | Sakti Nāyanār | Chapter—47 | Chapter—82 |

| Sl. No. | Name of the Idol | Reference in Periya Purāṇam | Reference in Upamanyu Bhakta Vilāsam |
|---|---|---|---|
| 46. | Idihal Kadavarko Nāyanār | Chapter—48 | Chapter—83 |
| 47. | Kanambulla Nāyanār | Chapter—49 | Chapter—84 |
| 48. | Kari Nāyanār | Chapter—50 | Chapter—85 |
| 49. | Niṅdranīr Nedumara Nāyanār | Chapter—51 | Chapter—86 |
| 50. | Vāyilar Nāyanār | Chapter—52 | Chapter—87 |
| 51. | Munaiadvār Nāyanār | Chapter—53 | Chapter—88 |
| 52. | Kaḷarsiṅga Nāyanār | Chapter—54 | Chapter—89 |
| 53. | Idaṅgaḷi Nāyanār | Chapter—55 | Chapter—90 |
| 54. | Seruṇtunai Nāyanār | Chapter—56 | Chapter—91 |
| 55. | Puhaḷtunai Nāyanār | Chapter—57 | Chapter—92 |
| 56. | Kotapuli Nāyanār | Chapter—58 | Chapter—93 |
| 57. | Bhaktarai Paṇivār | Chapter—59 | Chapter—33 |
| 58. | Paramaṇaiye Pāḍuvār | Chapter—60 | Chapter—34 |
| 59. | Sittatai Śivanpāle Vaittavar | Chapter—61 | Chapter—35 |
| 60. | Tiruvārūr Pirandār | Chapter—62 | Chapter—36 |
| 61. | Muppoḷudum Tirumeni Tinduvār | Chapter—63 | Chapter—37 |

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| Sl. No. | Name of the Idol | Reference in Periya Purāṇam | Reference in Upamanyu Bhakta Vilāsam |
|---|---|---|---|
| 62. | Muḷunīru Pūsiya Munivar | Chapter—64 | Chapter—38 |
| 63. | Appālumadicārṅdar | Chapter—65 | Chapter—39 |
| 64. | Pusalar Nāyanār | Chapter—66 | Chapter—40 |
| 65. | Maṅgaiyarkarasiyār | Chapter—67 | Chapter—41 |
| 66. | Nesa Nāyanār | Chapter—68 | Chapter—42 |
| 67. | Kochengat choḷa Nāyanār | Chapter—69 | Chapter—43 |
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| 69. | Sadiya Nāyanār | Chapter—71 | Chapter—45 |
| 70. | Isai Jñaniyār | Chapter—72 | Chapter—45 |
| 71. | Sundarar | Chapter—1 | Chapter—1 |

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6. Shrine of Kārtikeya
7. Shrine of Ganeśa (Mukkurani Vināyaka)
8. Karpaka Vināyaka
9. Shrine of Nāga
10. Shrine of Vīra Subramanya
11. Shrine of Minakṣi Sundareśvara
12. Hundred Pillared Hall
13. Ādi Vinayaka Shrine
14. Shrine of Śivakāmasundari
15. Shrine of Caṇḍesvera
16. Shrine of Citra Gupta
17. Shrine of Pṛthivi Devi
18. Mahiṣasura Mardini
19. Shrine of Subrahmanya
20. Pāndya Nāyaka Temple
21. Shrine of Navaliṅga
22. Śivaganga Tank
23. Shrine of Jambukeśvarar
24. Thousand Pillared Hall
73 Shrine of Ciṇtamani Ganeśa
74. Shrine of Subrahmanya
75. Shrine of Tyāgarāja
76&77 Shrines of Nandis

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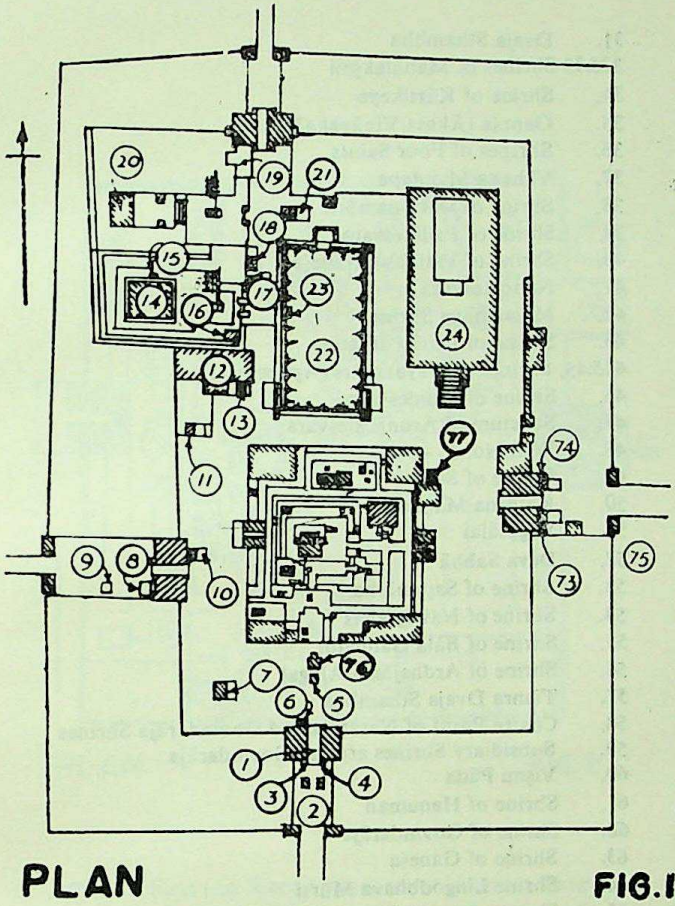


Plan of Sri Nataraja Temple

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# DETAILS OF FIGURES 2

## (PRĀKĀRAS 1 and 2)

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35. Ganeśa (Ākasa Vināyaka)
36. Shrines of Four Saints
37. Vāhana Maṇḍapa
38. Shrine of Dakṣinamūrti
39. Shrine of Pallikeśvara
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41. Nandikeśvara
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51. Yagasālai
52. Deva Sabhā
53. Shrine of Saṭṭanātha
54. Shrine of Navagrahas
55. Shrine of Bāla Ganpathi
56. Shrine of Ardhajāma Aḷagaḷ
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64. Shrine Lingodbhava Mūrti
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66. Palliyarai
67. Shrine of Ākasaliñga
68. Shrine of hiṣatana
69. Well No. 1
70. Kanaka Sabhā
71. Cit Sabhā
72. Shrine of Brahma Candeśvara

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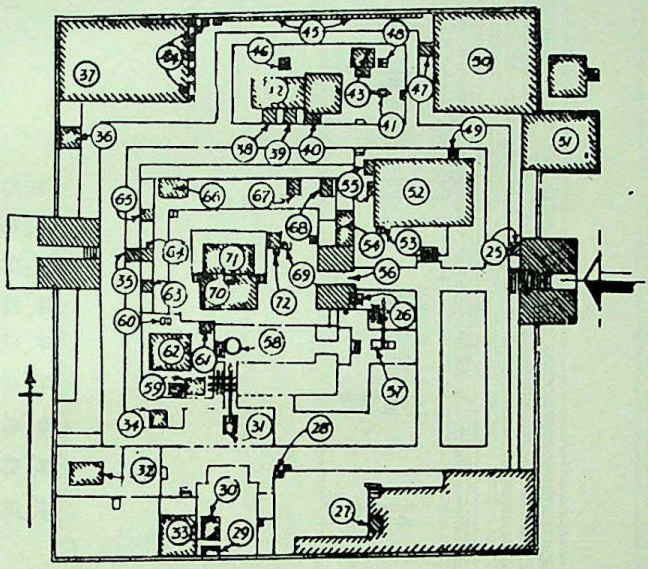


Plan of First and Second *Prakaras* of Nataraja Temple

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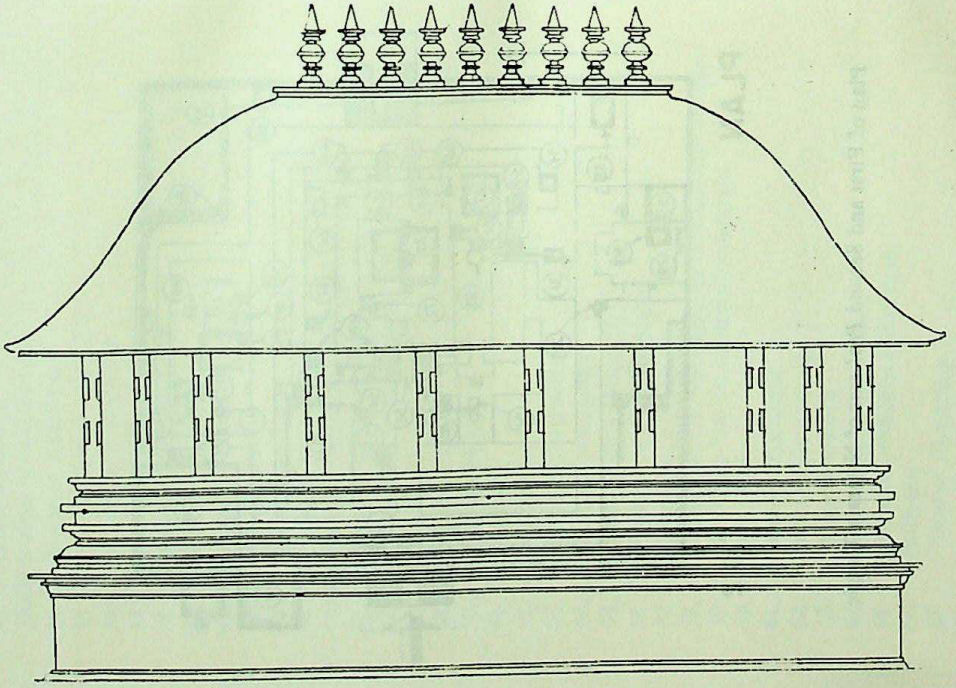
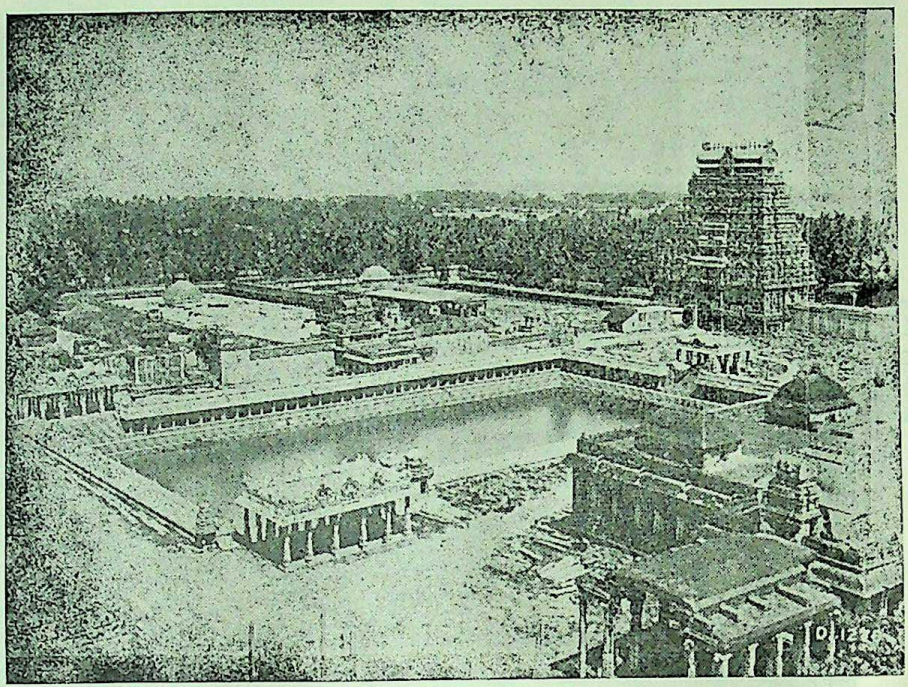


Fig. 3 Front Elevation of Cit Sabhā



General view of The Naṭarājā Temple–Chidambram

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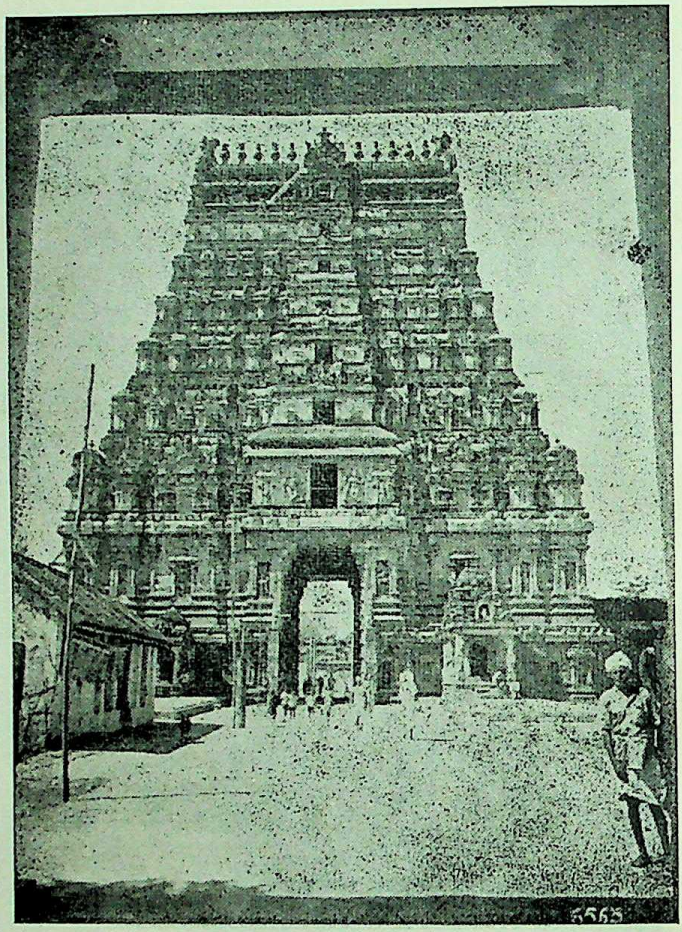
PLATE II



East Gopura

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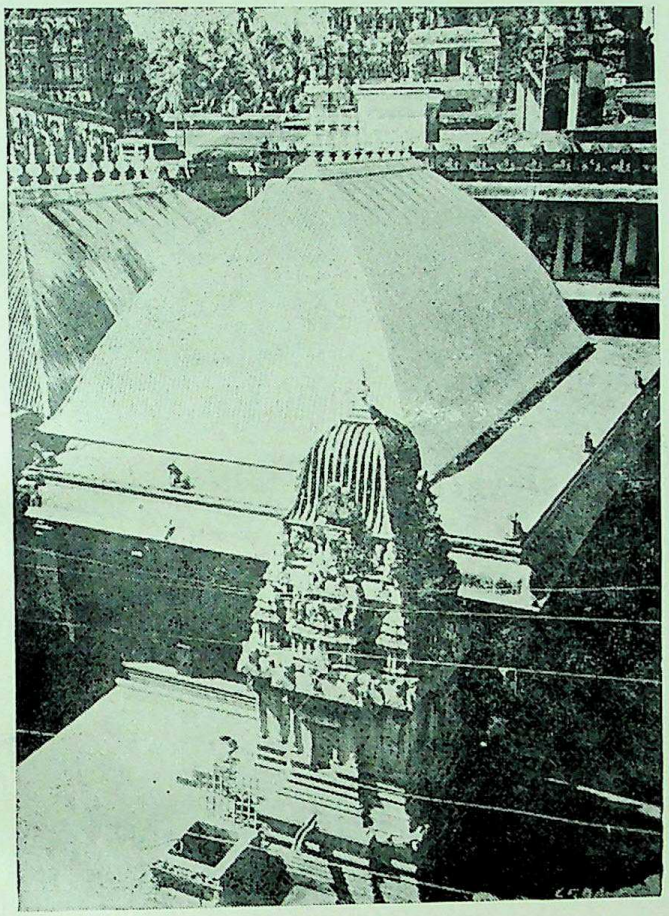
PLATE III



Close up view of Cit-Sabhā

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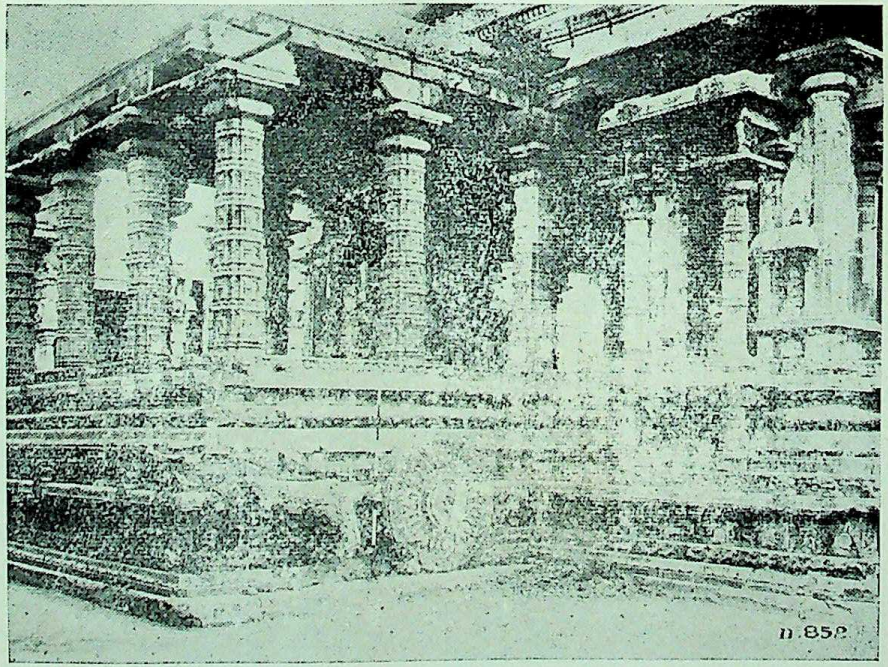
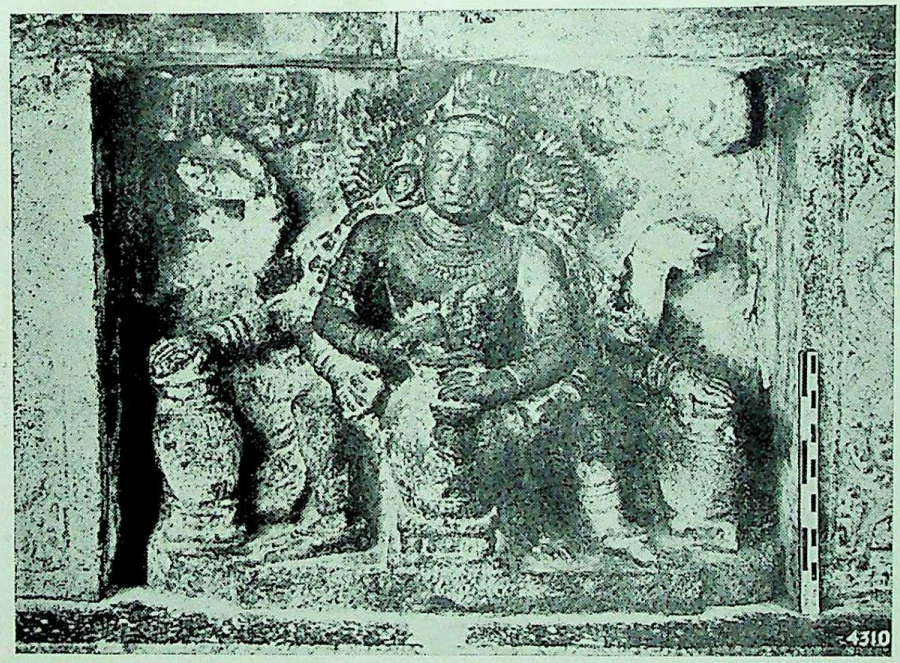



Close up of Nṛtta Sabhā

PLATE V




Śiva playing on musical Instruments–Nṛtta Sabhā

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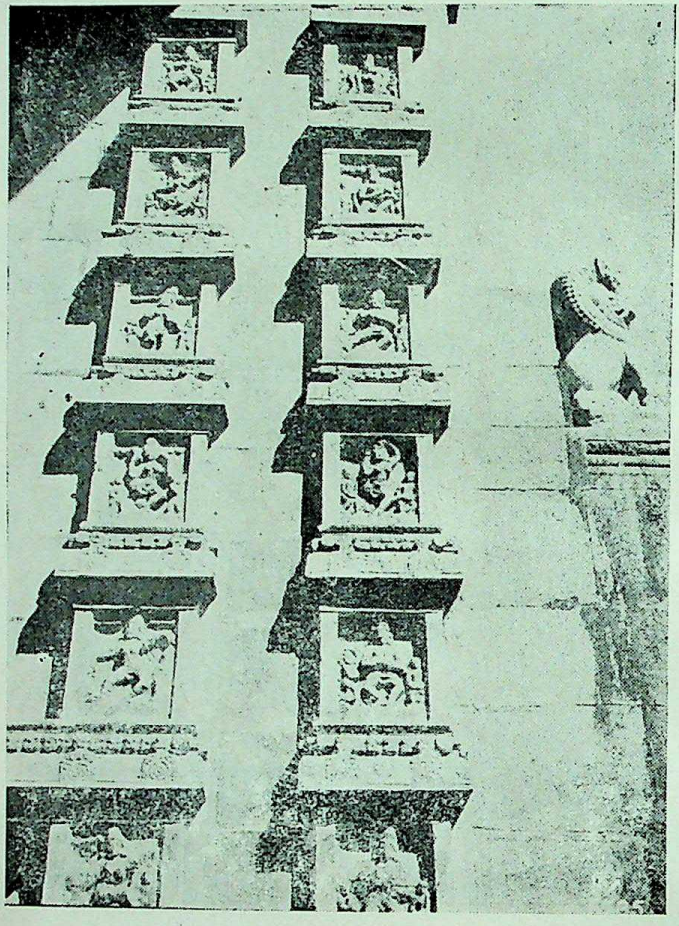
PLATE VI



Karaṇas on East Gopura

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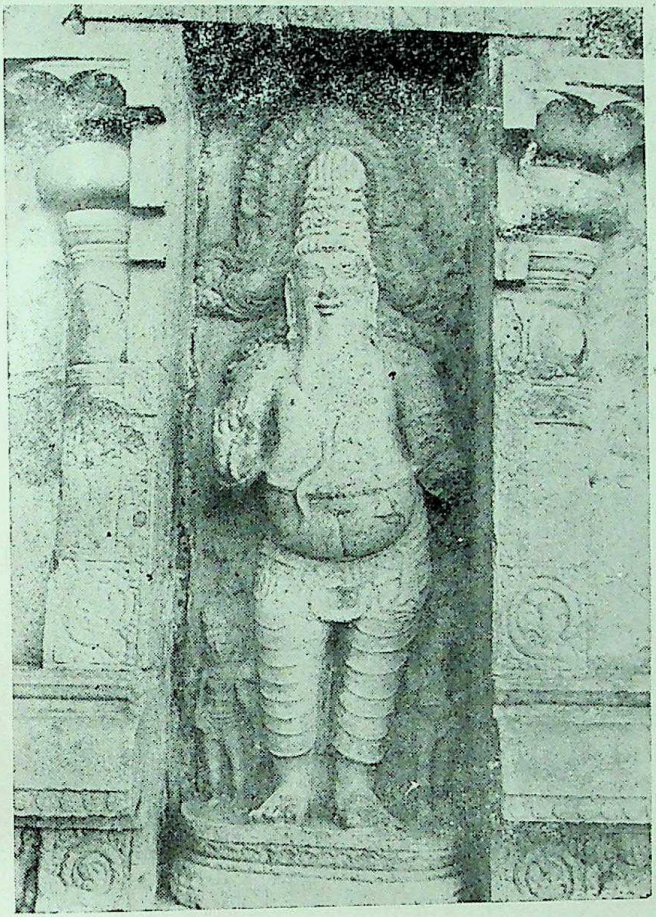
PLATE VII



Agastya-West Gopura

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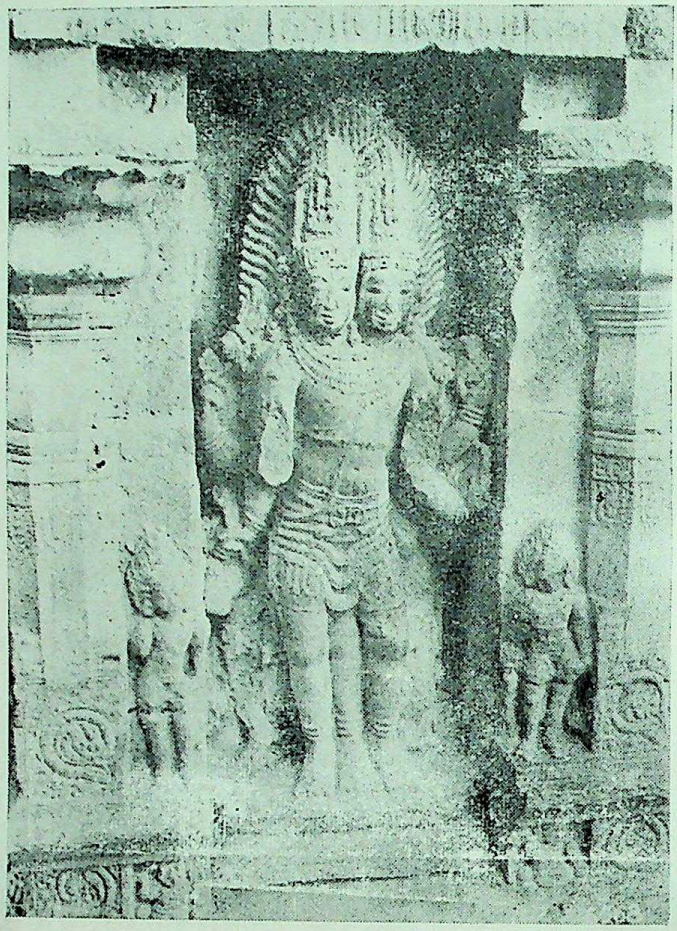
PLATE VIII



Agni- West Gopura

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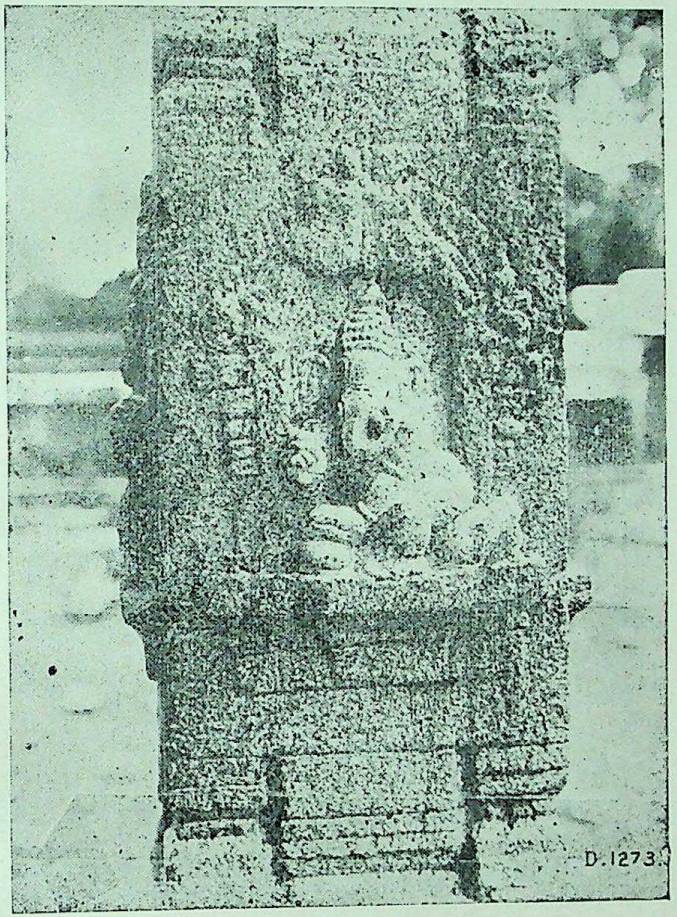
PLATE IX




Playing Ganeśa - Thousand pillared Hall

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PLATE X

Bronze images of Vyaghrapāda and Patañjali

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